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JANUARY 2022

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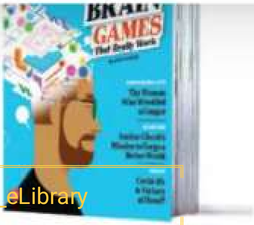
OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE *November* ISSUE



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Brain Games That Really Work

As an 83-year-old, I enjoyed the well-researched and well-designed cover story. Even before I started reading it, I was drawn to solving the Latin Square, Path Finder, Bubble Math and Word Worm games! Besides solving crosswords and puzzles, I've turned to reading, writing, watching movies and walking to fight off the cognitive degeneration that follows age—although, admittedly for two years now, due to the pandemic, my daily walk has been restricted to circling my bed 50 times, twice a day! Leisurely reading and re-watching my favourite films has kept me busy and mentally active, not to forget the letters I write to editors. You can't help old age creeping in, but you can make sure that you enjoy it!

—DR N. GOPALAKRISHNAN, *Bengaluru*

Dr N. Gopalakrishnan gets this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000. —EDs

Born this way

Dhananjay Chauhan's inspiring story gave me goosebumps and reminded me of my classmate who always scored high in academics but was constantly bullied and humiliated for being a transwoman. The story reveals the struggles and challenges in the life of transgender individuals and the discrimination they face every day. Though the Transgender Person's Act 2019 has been made to protect their rights, the stereotype that they are different from others needs to be ex-

society as well. We need to understand that a person whether a cisgender or a trans, is first a human being, and has equal rights to be respected and protected.

SHALINI BHARDWAJ, *via email*

Inter- Purr-Sonal Com-Meow-Nication

Really loved the way those witty kitties told their human parent what's right and wrong with them. As mum to four felines at home and one in a nearby park, I found it hilarious. Each and every pun was—truly cat-chy!

VANDANA D. JHANGIANI, *Mumbai.*

Knocking Out Diabetes

With diabetes fast emerging as an epidemic in the world, Bartholomew's article was an informative and time-appropriate read. Apart from it being hereditary in some cases, the disease develops gradually due to our

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lifestyles, a lack of awareness or due to ignoring the early symptoms of increased urination, increased thirst and weight loss. The chief culprits are the high sugar content in our food, and the change in our eating patterns—shifting from the traditional home-cooked food to dining out, eating processed food and the lack of exercise. A change in our lifestyle and behaviour will go a long way to prevent the onset of diabetes and its other complications.

DR ASHWANI KUMAR MALHOTRA. *Ludhiana*

Lessons in Giving

Watching children express themselves—say a child of eight talking about the voting behaviour of the Indian electorate on social media or a 10-year-old taking on the top leadership of her country for the delayed repeal of the contentious farming laws—indicate the emergence of an articulate and bold new generation. In Punjab, youngsters learn from each other: organizing small help groups for the needy, spearheading fundraising drives and such. Their potential is limited only by our imagination.

PROF. MOHAN SINGH, *Amritsar*

Finding Gobi

This story about an unlikely, lifelong bond between a Chinese dog and Scotland marathon racer left me wonderstruck. We've all heard the old story about Androcles and the lion as well as present-day anecdotes about pets returning to their humans after years or traversing long distances. But Gobi, finding something unique in Dion, a foreigner in the scorching desert, and the two developing a mutual admiration is beyond logic and comprehension—nothing short of a fairy tale. A great tale about love at first sniff and sight!

PARTHASARATHY MANDADI, *Tirupati*

Appealing To Our Better Nature

As far as climate change is concerned, Amitav Ghosh has now emerged as a knowledgeable, perceptive and articulate commentator. His recent dispatches about the COP26 summit at Glasgow made one long to be present there. His comments about the shocking ignorance of our urban educated, people of Mumbai being oblivious to the precarious environment of their geo-engineered peninsula and the earth hitting back at us, are all true. So is his remark about the "policy makers not allowing anyone to speak and their staggering arrogance".

KRISHAN KALRA, *Gurugram*

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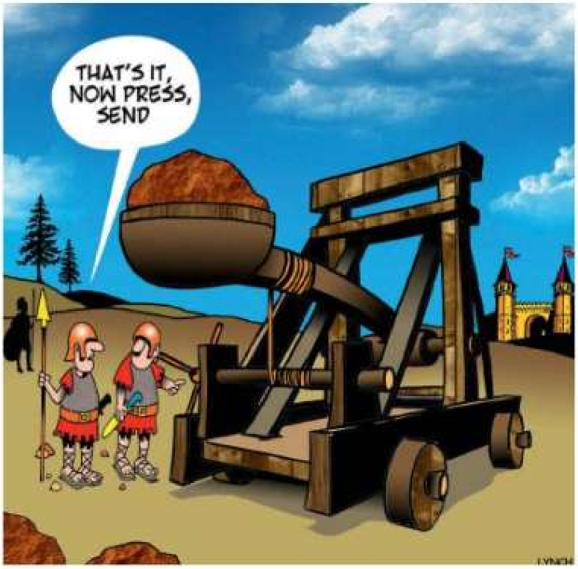
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LYNCH

We were hanging out in the lounge of our naval supply ship when the executive officer walked in. He took one look at the pilot sitting atop a table and blew his top.

"Don't sit on the table!" he barked. "Is that what you do at home?"

"No, sir," said the pilot calmly. "But, then, we don't land helicopters on our roof, either."

—BRIAN LAVALLEY

During my teens, I was a squad leader at a military summer camp. We were required to wear our full uniform at all times, with no exceptions and no accessories or makeup allowed. One day, I noticed that one of the female campers had exceptionally dark eyelids. "Are you wearing eyeliner?" I asked. "No!" she said defensively. Then, after a pause, "Why? Is it running?"

—ASHLEY HEAD

Officers at a military installation were being lectured about a new computer that could withstand nuclear and chemical attacks. Suddenly, the trainer saw that an officers had a cup of coffee and yelled, "No eating or drinking in this room!" The officer said meekly, "Sure, but why?" "A coffee spill could ruin the keyboard."

—VIA *GCFL.net*

Military Truisms:

- Need to find an officer ASAP? Take a nap.
- If you see a bomb disposal technician running, try to keep up with him.

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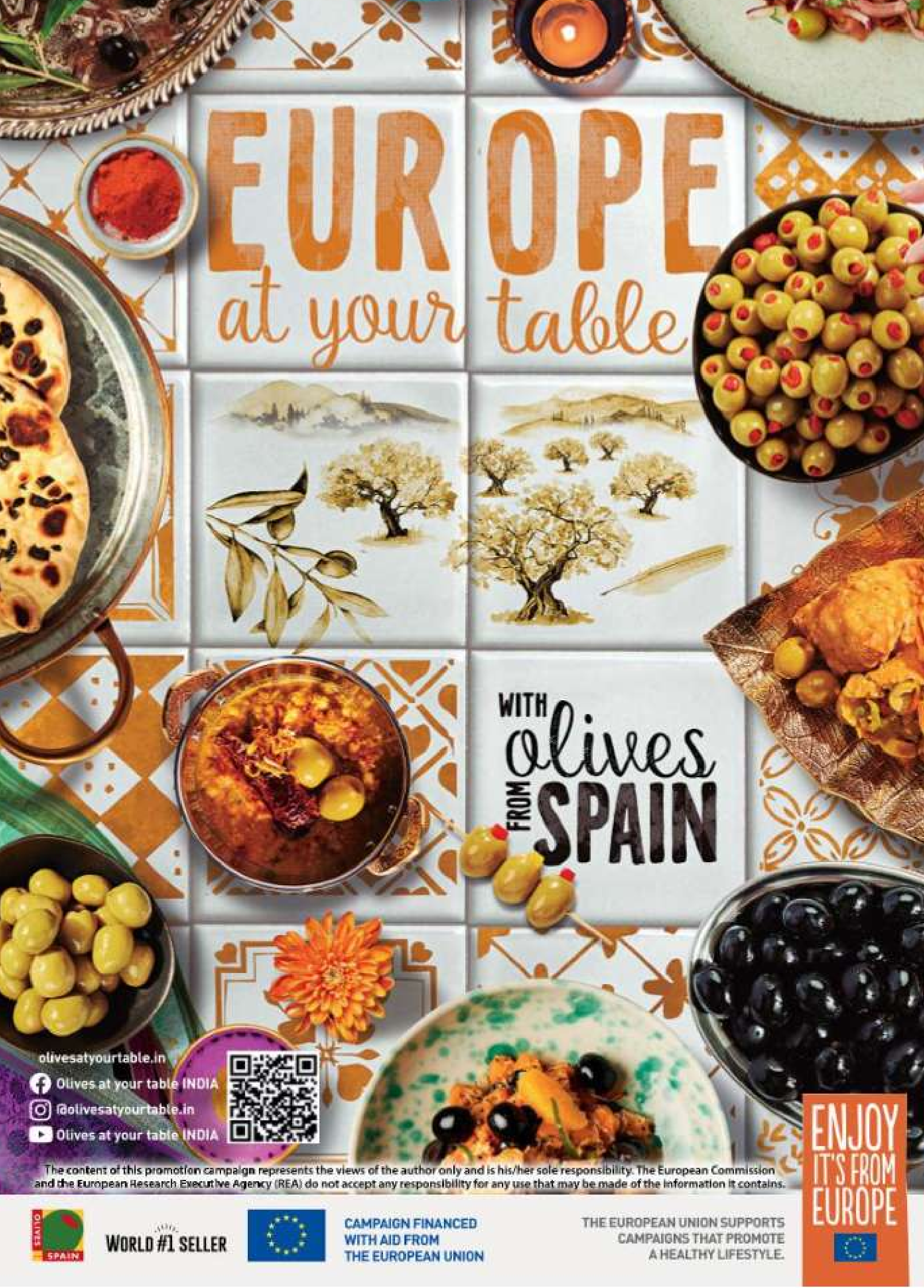
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A Pandemic of Loneliness

It is only through consistent and conscious measures that the increasingly fragile and fractured nature of urban relationships can be resolved

BY *Kamna Chhibber and Dr Samir Parikh*

HUMANS ARE SOCIAL animals. We seek relationships, strive to be a part of large groups, and remain relevant across all arenas of life. Most of us assume a steady trajectory of relationships throughout our lives—from being single, to dating, then marriage, possibly parenthood. We assume our lives will be surrounded by other people, both in personal and professional capacities. The media we consume lead us to develop notions about the nature and dynamics of friendships and familial interactions. But, when we look around, there is often a very different reality surrounding us.

Have Urban Relationships Changed?

Even in the best of times, the foundation of urban relationships rests on fragile ground. Over the years, human relationships have seen a shift. From fostering dependence on each other, there has been a rising need to seek independence. A movement has ensued where, in pursuit of bigger goals, better lives and loftier achievements, our social spaces have narrowed. A kind of superficiality has trickled

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

through its cracks and displaced stronger, deeper bonds with each other.

While many take the time to meet and speak to each other or check in with near and dear ones, rarely are they deeply invested in each other's lives. Despite being surrounded by millions, there is disconnectedness even from those who reside in one's vicinity. Days meld into one another as people go through the cycles of work and day-to-day routines with little or no time left for much else. We're caught in a never-ending race, knowing, and caring little about our fellow participants.

The Genesis of the Change

The big question then is 'What is leading to this change in the landscape of urban relationships?' We are always in a state of transition and the systems we are part of have been undergoing significant change. If we analyze this from a social and cultural standpoint you'll recognize that the sense of community, interconnectedness and dependency, which were an integral part of our societal fabric, have increasingly become diluted. There is a continual shift towards independence, solitary living and a strengthening of boundaries between oneself and others.

In drawing these boundaries there is a drift towards self-reliance and an increasing dependency on technology, gadgets and social media which impacts interpersonal relatedness.

Concurrently there is a push to do more, stay busy and constantly be productive in order to progress at work. While having a network is seen as valuable, taking time to really engage with people, nurture and build connections into significant relationships is not necessarily a priority, or one for which much time is available. These attributes are seen as relevant and important to growth, but without an understanding of the direction and nature of that growth.

The result of this has been a rising preoccupation with the self at the cost of our relational needs, which are also important to provide meaning and purpose to life. During the pandemic, there have been immense transitions which have further altered the landscape of relationships in even more significant ways.

REAL CONVERSATIONS ARE HARD. THERE IS AN UNEASINESS ABOUT REVEALING ONE'S TRUE EXPERIENCE.

The Impact of the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying lockdowns compelled people to take a long hard look at the state of their relationships. While meeting the immediate need to quarantine and isolate, there has been a growing realization that while one may have innumerable followers and friends on social media, those in the real world are far more limited. In vying for likes and sharing posts about a wonderful life, somewhere the ability to physically talk about difficult things had diminished. Sharing feelings and problems in real conversations and confrontations is hard and there is an all-round uneasiness about revealing what is truly being experienced—a growing anxiety and uncertainty about the new world created by the pandemic. Moods and sleep patterns have been impacted. The inability to resort to previously relied upon methods of coping such as going out has denied us the safety and comfort of the pack and made it challenging to connect at a deeper level.

The only way to break the cycle of escapism and insulation is by detaching from tech-based diversions, focussing on real-world relationships, prioritizing and reconnecting with the self and the people who surround us. This requires us to relook, reconsider and adapt. Here's how:

Connect with your own self Self-awareness is a key to understanding your needs and desires. Developing a conscious and mindful approach is an essential element towards ensuring there is no disconnectedness from people who surround you and the life you build for yourself.

Draw boundaries Learning to say 'no' and carving out time for other people and activities can lead to a reforging of human connections. Doing this does not mean you are being unfair or irresponsible. It is a necessary reallocation of energies to provide emotional succour to oneself and others.

Do the things you love Invest in yourself by engaging with your interests and passions. While you work towards being available for people around you, taking care of what you need is also essential.

Make time Do not allow time to become a missing commodity. Learn to prioritize and invest time in the people you love and care about. Career goals are often not enough to provide complete fulfilment. Building meaningful relationships is vital.

INVEST TIME IN THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE. CAREER GOALS ARE OFTEN NOT ENOUGH TO PROVIDE COMPLETE FULFILMENT.

Be present. Learn to disengage from your work, chores and gadgets and take a mental break. Practise being present in the here and now by reminding yourself to redirect to your attention to where you are and what you are doing as a conscious activity.

Switch Off to Switch On

As virtual spaces and gadgets are turning into an extension of our physical selves, it's important that in the journey of investing in your life and relationships, you learn to disengage from technology. Follow these simple strategies:

1. Set time limits for gadget use.
2. Put aside your gadgets when eating food, reading or watching something so that you focus on the activity you are engaging in.
3. Consider creating zones in your home where gadgets are not permitted.
4. Learn to switch off at least an hour prior to going to sleep so that your mind can relax.
5. Take the help of family or friends if you struggle to implement strategies to limit your gadget use.

A Final Word

Changing any habit takes time and persistence. As you move towards building connectedness with the self and with people around you, be patient. Give yourself time to bring about incremental change. Your patience will be crucial to your success.

Kamna Chhibber heads the Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences at Fortis Healthcare. Dr Samir Parikh is a consultant psychiatrist with Fortis Healthcare and is the Director of the Fortis National Mental Health Program. Their book Alone in a Crowd: Overcoming Loneliness of Urban Living, *was published by Rupa Publications*

SMILE

Parenting: To Coddle, or Neglect?

BY *Richard Glover*

THE YOUNGEST SIBLING in a family, according to a recent report, is often sleeker and fitter than the first-born child. While I'm with the scientists when it comes to global warming, the importance of vaccines and the need for dental hygiene, I must break ranks on this.

I have had children. I have observed the children of others. The only possible conclusion: standards slip with each additional child.

With the first born, everything must be perfect. They are fed a diet of high-quality vegetables and organically reared meat. The staff, by

ILLUSTRATION BY *Sam Island*

which I mean the mother and father, are in the kitchen night and day, pausing in their culinary efforts only to read linguistically challenging texts and to perform ethnically diverse folk dances for the child's amusement.

Photographs are taken, almost constantly, recording events such as First Burp, First Wriggle and What We Took To Be The First Smile But In Retrospect Was Just Colic.

THE SOCCER ENTOURAGE HAS DWINDLED TO ONE HUNGOVER FATHER.

As the child grows older, a protective, loving and educationally rich system is established in which they are permitted to watch one hour of television each week, providing it's a nature documentary.

Ballet shoes are purchased. A cello—a cello!—is not considered too great an expense. The first soccer game is witnessed not by one parent, but by two parents, four grand-parents and an uncle visiting from overseas. There are pop stars with smaller entourages.

The child, inevitably, is considered "gifted". It's at this point that the second child is born. Standards immediately decline.

The hand-operated mincer, in which baby food had been freshly prepared by the kitchen staff, is never retrieved from the bottom drawer. Instead, commercially produced slop is suddenly rated "nutritionally superior—and so much more convenient". The bedtime reading session, which, with the first child, had involved 50 minutes of funny voices and entertaining asides, now lasts the three minutes between when Daddy first lies on the bed and when Daddy begins snoring.

The number of photographs moderates from five a day to one every six weeks. A trendy brand of jumpsuits in which the first child was dressed have been replaced with cheap copies from the discount store.

Television viewing is still restricted to 'nature documentaries', but the definition of 'nature documentaries' appears to have widened to include *The Lion King, Toy Story 4,* and real-estate reality shows.

The soccer entourage has dwindled to one rather hungover father, whose interest seems to be largely focused on finding something to eat. And the request for a trumpet, in order to join the school band, is declined on the basis of expense—why don't you try Mum's old guitar?

All this, of course, is just limbering

up for the arrival of the third child, at which point standards collapse completely.

The definition of toddler food has now grown to include a serving of nachos and some gnawing on the edge of last night's pizza. This 'meal' is served while watching a 'nature documentary'—one that appears to involve Bruce Willis shooting at people in a New York airport.

HOW CAN SCIENCE CLAIM THAT THE YOUNGEST SIBLINGS TEND TO BE THE HEALTHIEST?

The third child will be six years old before they are the subject of a single photograph, and even then it's just their right leg in a photo of the dog. They are dressed in clothes handed down from a second cousin, soaked in extra-strength detergent to remove the stains.

They hitchhike to soccer.

They learn music on a kazoo.

When it comes to table manners, the only guidance they are given involves the phrase: "Don't wipe your hands on the furniture, that's disgusting. Use your T-shirt like your father."

How, given all of this, can science still claim that the youngest siblings tend to be the healthiest?

Their theory, should you be interested, goes like this: First-time mothers, it is said, are less adept at pumping calories into the kid when the kid is still in the womb, and so the proto-kid shifts its metabolism in order to store more fat.

This then becomes a lifetime habit, with the first-borns waddling around trying to keep up with their sleeker, younger siblings.

What nonsense.

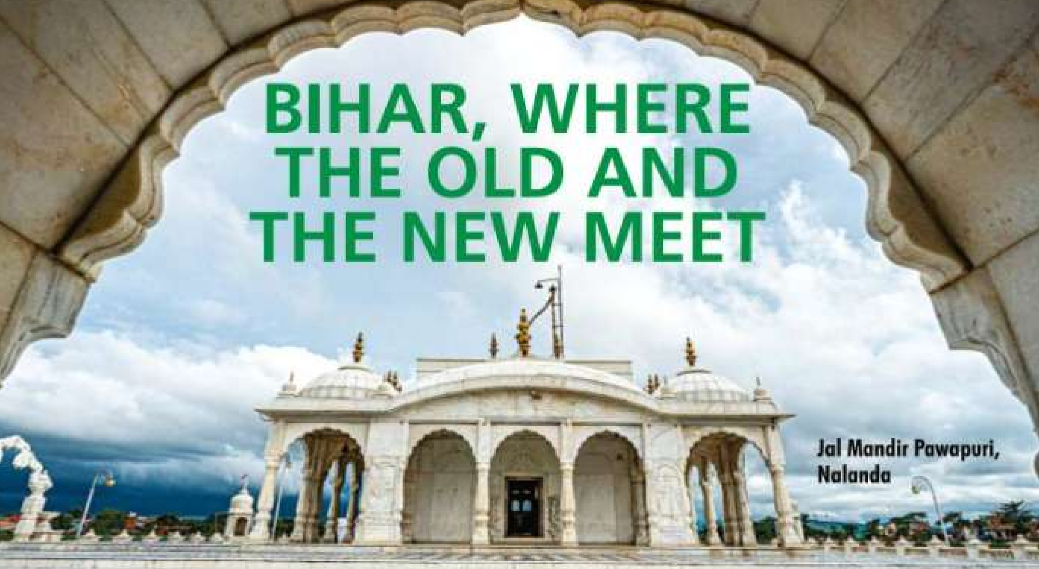
Here's my alternative theory: The younger ones, having grown up with parents oblivious to their welfare, are now living a life so dissolute they don't have time to put on weight.

Offer them a home-cooked meal and they'll decline—they'd rather go outside and smoke a cigarette.

Or maybe, just maybe, humans are like grapevines. The best wine often comes from grapes planted in stony soil and starved of water. They thrive on the neglect. The grapes are smaller, but more powerful, filled with flavour. And that may be the story of the fit, slim, and intense younger siblings.

I'd like to prove my various theories by showing you photographs of these later-born children, recording the circumstances of their childhood and adolescence. What a shame that there appear to be none in existence. R

BIHAR, WHERE THE OLD AND THE NEW MEET


Jal Mandir Pawapuri, Nalanda

New Ropeway Mandar, Banka

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Takhat Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib

Bihar is a medley of ancient cultures that becomes easy to access with new amenities. It boasts of The Takhat Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib, a marvellous gurudwara in Patna marking the birthplace of the 10th Sikh Guru, Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji Maharaj. It is also the place where Lord Mahavira was cremated and is commemorated by Jal Mandir, Pawapuri. The ropeway built on Mandar Hill makes reaching the summit easy for Hindu and Jain pilgrims.

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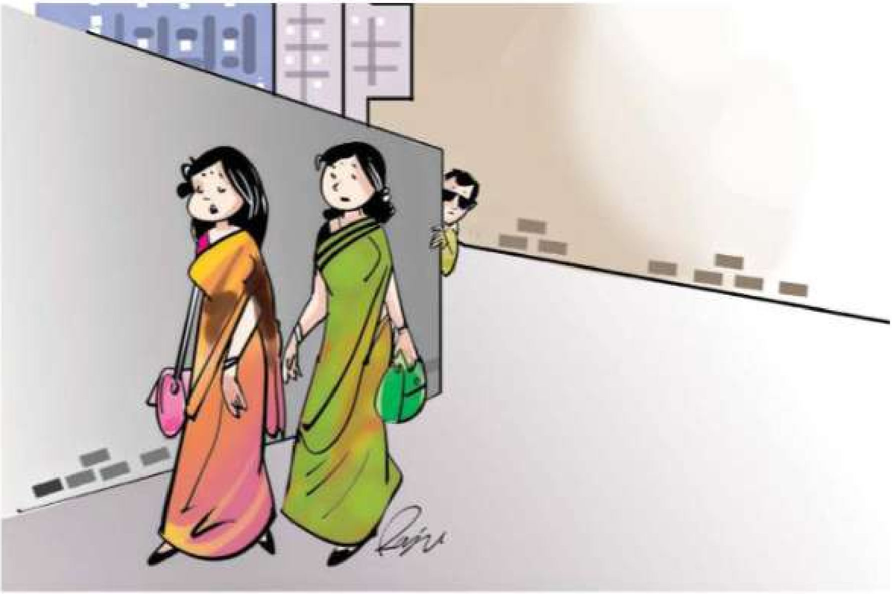


"It was my father before my marriage and now my husband, they have the same habit."

How Engine-ous!

In an unfortunate derailment of duty, Rajiv Ranjan Jha, a railway engineer at the Samastipur Railway Division in Bihar, tried to illegally sell a vintage steam engine as 'scrap.' The engine was stationed in Purnia for public display when Jha decided: Out with the old, in with some jingle-jangle for his pockets.

Jha's plan was on track till a pesky sub-inspector deployed at the RPF outpost began asking questions about the scrap he was loading into a pick-up van. To lay suspicions to rest, Jha brandished a forged letter from the Divisional Mechanical Engineer that the 'scrap material' was to be taken to the diesel locomotive shed. He even signed a memo—the plan's Achilles heel—which an RPF employee

ILLUSTRATION BY *Raju Epuri*

brought to the notice of their superiors when the scrap failed to reach its destination. Unadulterated greed aside, perhaps Jha's most offensive crime was in treating the lovely, vintage metre-gauge engine as scrap in the first place. Pearls before swine, indeed.

SOURCE: HINDUSTANTIMES.COM

Loss of Inheritance

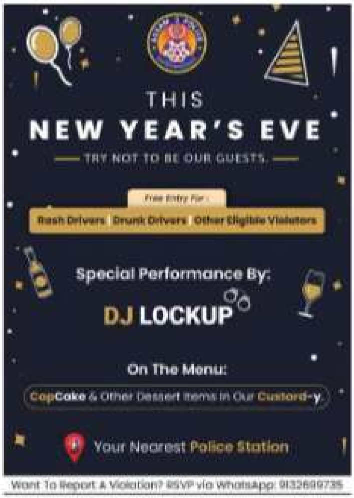
Talking of old, valuable things, the Red Fort was in the news recently. No, nothing hoisted nor taken down, but the Delhi High Court did have to contend with a certain Sultana Begum, widow of the great-grandson of last Mughal king Bahadur Shah Zafar, who asked that the Centre hand over the Red Fort of Delhi to her or offer her adequate recompense. Why? The government of India had illegal occupation of her ancestral property, in direct contravention of her fundamental rights and now owed her back the Fort itself or equivalent compensation. The court however rubbished the claims. Hey, don't judge her too harshly—one's allowed to try anything once.

SOURCE: NDTV.COM

Dance of Democracy

The experiment of democracy in our country, is often a gift that keeps on giving. This season's greetings come from a village in Madhya Pradesh, where the post of gram sarpanch (village head) was opened for auction. With bids starting at ₹21 lakh, the gavel finally came down on the winning bid of ₹44 lakh by a certain Saubhag Yadav. Of course, the whole event is completely illegal, but that does not take away from its popular support—villagers unanimously resolved that Yadav will be their new village sarpanch and no one, except him, will file nominations for the post in the upcoming polls to ensure that he is elected unopposed. This system they believe would clear the election process of the use of illegal muscle and money power. Sure it clears the elections of all the democratic principles it is designed to uphold too but as they say, the devil's in the details, and who wants that?

SOURCE: NEWINDIANEXPRESS.COM


THIS
NEW YEAR'S EVE
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The Assam Police's cautionary invite to the party of the season!

—COMPILED BY NAOREM ANUJA

Reader's Digest will pay for contributions to this column. Post your suggestions with the source to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

POINTS TO PONDER

We have the ability to be heroes of our families, our communities and our lives. It's important to remind people of that truth: you have what it takes to make an impact. What is your hero's journey?

Kerry Washington, *actor*

You've got try your luck at least once day, because you could be going around lucky all day and not even know it.

Jimmy Dean, *singer*

As I grow older, I've learnt not to quibble with compliments. I just accept them gratefully. I know how fleeting praise is and how quickly it dates, so I never take it seriously.

Anuja Chauhan, *author*

FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK, ALAMY, VIKRAM SHARMA

Kerry Washington

Jimmy Dean

Anuja Chauhan

Do some leaders believe they can survive and thrive on their own? Can there be peace and prosperity in one third of the world if two thirds are under siege and facing calamitous threats to their wellbeing? What the world needs now is less than 200 persons who are willing and prepared to lead! Leaders must not fail those who elect them to lead.

Mia Amor Mottley, *Prime Minister of Barbados at the UN Climate Change Conference 2021*

The chief beauty about time is that you cannot waste it in advance. The next year, the next day, the next hour are lying ready for you ... You can turn over a new leaf every hour if you choose.

Arnold Bennett, *novelist*

Don't limit a child to your own learning, for she was born in another time.

Rabindranath Tagore, *author*

FROM LEFT: PTI, ALAMY (2)

Rabindranath Tagore
Arnold Bennett
Mia Amor Mottley

Prime Minister watching the model of Siddharth Nagar medical College

EXPANSION OF HEALTH SERVICES GAVE BIG RELIEF TO THE PEOPLE

CM Yogi Adityanath brought a big positive change in the health infrastructure of the state. In the last 4 years and 9 month 16 government medical colleges have been constructed in the state which has the largest population in the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 9 medical colleges in Devriya, Etah, Fatehpur, Gazipur, Hardoi, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Pratapgarh and Siddharthnagar districts on 25th October 2021 which were built at a cost of 2329 crore rupees.

From Siddharth Nagar, a place famous for Lord Buddha, the Prime Minister gave a boost to the health services in the state. Uttar Pradesh is the only state in the country to launch 9 medical colleges at one go.

Appointment of 459 faculty, 216 senior residents, 402 junior residents along with 460 paramedical staff and 225 nurses has been completed in medical colleges of 9 districts including Devriya, Etah, Fatehpur, Gazipur, Hardoi, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Pratapgarh and Siddharth Nagar. More than 6165 youth got employment in these medical colleges.

With the vision of 'one district one medical College', 30 medical colleges are being opened in the state under Pradhan mantri health security scheme. Classes of MBBS courses have already started from year 2019 in 7 of these medical colleges.

Districts like Amethi, Auraiya, Bijnor, Bulandshahar, Chandauli, Gonda, Kanpur dehat, Kaushambi, Kushinagar, Lakhimpur khiri, Lalitpur Pilibhit,Sonbhadra and Sultanpur will get medical colleges by 2022-23.

After 2017, **4592** seats of MBBS and postgraduate have increased in government and private medical colleges. Out of these, **3588** are of MBBS and **804** seats are of postgraduate courses. Apart from it **100** students each are studying MBBS in AIIMS Raebareli and Gorakhpur.

Prior to 2017, **1840** MBBS seats were there in government medical colleges which has now increased to **3828** seats. It means in the last four and half years there is an increase of 1988 seats in MBBS courses. In the same manner, the total number of seats has increased from **2550** to **4150** in private medical colleges.

To give specialist doctors proper posting and recognition as per their capability, the Yogi government not only made the provision of appointment of specialist doctors by making elaborate amendments in the manual, but also made arrangements for their posting on **1** grade above post. This paved the way for the recruitment of **1200** specialist doctors by Uttar Pradesh public service commission which happened for the first time.

Government has made a new strategy to fill the vacant posts of medical professors in medical colleges and institutes. For this purpose the retirement age of medical officers has been increased from **65** years to **70** years. The government is also making a strategy to appoint experts of army background on honorarium basis.

The first human milk bank, the first integrated spine centre, orthoplastic unit in the medicine department and paediatric orthopaedic department have been established in King George medical College of Lucknow.

Stem cell Research centre, bone marrow transplant centre and liver transplant centres have been established in Sanjay Gandhi postgraduate medical institute in Lucknow. Robotic surgery has also started in the institute. Emergency medicine and renal transplant centre are under construction.

Free of cost dialysis facility has been made available in **47** districts of state. Free CT scan facility is also available in **56** district hospitals, while **170** mobile medical unit services are also running in the state.

PICU (pediatrics intensive care unit) project which played an important role in controlling encephalitis, has been implemented throughout the state to save children from covid-19. **100** bedded ICU has been prepared in all medical colleges for children.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee medical university is being established in chak ganjaria area of Lucknow. LDA has identified **50** acres of land for this. Posts of vice chancellor, registrar and Finance officer have been created for the university.

The study of all Ayush methods will be conducted at a single campus of the first Ayush University, situated at pipari in BhataHat area of Gorakhpur district. The university being built with the cost of Rs **299** crores in **52** acres area will start running its classes from March 2023.

67 colleges of Ayurveda (**58** private) along with **15** colleges of Unani (**2** Government and **13** private) and **12** colleges of homeopathy (**9** Government and **3** private) will be affiliated with Ayush University.

Emphasis is being given on availability of high tech medical equipment in **3022** primary health centers and **855** community health centers. Special focus is on establishment of new equipment in the pathology and radiology department along with meeting the shortage of doctors and paramedical staff.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi viewing the model of Jewar Airport

AIRPORTS BECAME HALLMARK OF UP NEW 'FLIGHT' OF DEVELOPMENT TOOK OFF

On 25th November, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, laid the foundation stone of Noida international airport in Jewar area of Gautam Budh Nagar. This will be world's fourth and Asia's biggest airport.

For the development of the first phase of Noida airport, Yogi Government has acquired around 1334 hectare (3000 acres) land. Aviation Sector Company Zurich airport international AG has been selected for its construction through global bidding.

Noida international airport will be developed in two phases. In first phase, the airport will get 2 runways and in 2nd phase number of runways will extend to five. The airport with two runways will have the capacity for 70 million passengers annually.

> **After 7 decades of independence, first time Uttar Pradesh is getting it's due. With the efforts of double engine government, Uttar Pradesh is converting into country's most connected area. Whether it is Rapid rail corridor, expressways, metro connectivity or dedicated freight corridors connecting Uttar Pradesh to the east and western coastline, these all are becoming new identity of a modern Uttar Pradesh.**
>
> *— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India*

According to the capacity of passengers, the Noida international airport will be developed in four phases. In first phase in 2023-24, the airport with the capacity of **1.20** crore passengers annually will have one runway, while in 2031 it will get another runway and the capacity will be increased to **30** million which means **3** crore passengers annually.

In 2036, the capacity will further increase to **50** million and in 2040 it will be able to have the capacity of **70** million which means **7** crore passengers annually. In year 2023-24, first phase of Noida international airport will be dedicated to the public and the first flight will take off.

Noida international airport will be a major centre for maintenance, repair and operation of aeroplanes. An MRO (maintenance repair and overhaul) station is being constructed here in **40** acres area for the maintenance, repair and overhauling of aeroplanes.

The first phase of Noida international airport will be completed by year 2024. Rupees **30000** crores will be invested in it. The airport will generate avenues of 1 lakh jobs and will further attract investment of around **60000** crore rupees. Uttar Pradesh will become first state in the country with five international airports and **21** airports.

Under the guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the UDAN scheme is being implemented effectively in the state. Before 2017 there were only two functional airports in Uttar Pradesh while now **9** airports are functioning, **8** airports are almost ready while work is going on swiftly on four airports.

On 28 October, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, inaugurated Kushinagar international airport. On the same day, first international flight landed in Kushinagar and **100** Buddhist monks along with **25** member delegation came from Shrilanka.

The runway of Kushinagar airport is longest among the aeroplane stationing airports functioning in Uttar Pradesh. Length of its runway is **3200** metres and and width is **45** meters. In terms of the length of the runway Varanasi international airport comes on second place.

The Kushinagar district which was neglected for almost seven decades after independence, is now emerging as India's cultural ambassador for the world. With the landing of first passenger plane on 26 November at the Kushinagar airport, a golden chapter added in the development journey of Uttar Pradesh.

The Kushinagar international airport situated at the mahpariNirvan sthali of lord Buddha, has given direct air connectivity to more than a dozen South East Asian countries including Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam along with ASEAN countries.

THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRIES

Uttar Pradesh became the second biggest economy in the country. Per capita income also doubled. In ease of doing business ranking, Uttar Pradesh got second place in the country. Report of Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy says that the rate of unemployment was 17.5% in 2017 which has been reduced to a mere 4.1 %.

Uttar Pradesh is the Numero Uno in the country in terms of micro, small and medium industry units. A total of 89.99 lakh units are registered in the state which is 14.20 percent of the total registered units in the country. In the last four and half years, more than 80 lakh MSME units have been established in Uttar Pradesh.

31 common facility centres are being established in the state with the cost of rupees 200 crore to provide facilities to the local industries according to their need. 14 of them have completed and the rest 17 will start working in the next few months.

There is a provision in Yogi government's micro small and medium industries (establishment and function) act-2020 that once the entrepreneur submits the required papers at district industries centre, the approval certificate will be released within 72 hours.

After the release of the certificate, the MSME unit will not need any kind of permission from any government department for the next 900 days and one can immediately start his enterprise. This has also helped in achieving the target of 5 lakh jobs in one year.

With the co-ordination of the state government, banks have given loans to more than 82 lakh MSME units in the last 4 and half years. In a sample survey of 3 lakh 8 thousand 331 units, it had been confirmed physically that jobs were provided to 9 lakh 51 thousand 803 people. More than 2 crore people have got employment in these 82 lakh MSME units.

03 Lakh crores rupees is the worth of Investment projects being implemented

56 Thousand crore rupees came as foreign Investment during covid period

4.10 Lakh applications disposed on nivesh Mitra portal

11933 crore rupees invested in defence corridor

7 Japanese companies, 2 companies from Canada, 4 from Germany, 1 from Hong Kong, 2 from Singapore, 3 from United Kingdom, 5 from the United States and 4 Korean companies are investing in the state. This includes famous companies like AiKa and Microsoft.

According to the latest report of the Central government's department of promotion of industries and internal trade UP is among top 10 states in terms of foreign investment. Sectors like computer, hardware, service sector, software, telecommunication, mobile set manufacturing, and automobile manufacturing are attracting foreign investment in Uttar Pradesh.

922 big and small industrial units are being set up in 15 districts of Uttar Pradesh including Mathura, Chitrkut Unnao and Ghaziabad. These units will soon start functioning. In the covid period these industries have not only got the land early but many investors have started setting up their industries units also.

In Mathura, Pepsico is established a plant with an investment of 750 crore rupees. This company will provide employment to 1600 people from January next year. Investment of 400 crore rupees is taking place in Chitrakoot in the food processing sector. In the same way 17 big companies are making investments of 8625 crore rupees in different parts of the state.

3 electronics manufacturing clusters worth 40 thousand crore rupees are being set up in the state. It will generate employment for 4 lakh people. Samsung mobile unit already established in Noida. Country's biggest startup incubator will be established in Lucknow in front of Amausi airport.

odop

ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT

GAVE NEW IDENTITY TO UP

AVENUES OF EMPLOYMENT: Under ODOP opportunities for livelihood and employment were provided to around 25 lakh people till date. This has also increased the export of state by 38% percent.

MARGIN MONEY SCHEME: 5122 beneficiaries have received benefit of ODOP margin money scheme in 2020-21 which was started with an aim to provide monetary help for establishing any project.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME: Under this an artisan will get 10 days free of cost residential training. After completing the training the artisan will get a certificate as well as an Advanced toolkit.

E-COMMERCE FACILITY: ODOP has collaboration with stakeholders like quality control of India and Bombay stock exchange. Flipkart, Amazon, eBay are e-commerce partners.

WORKING CAPITAL LOAN: Facility of Rs 26000 crore Rs working capital loan has been provided to around 10 lakh MSME after the lockdown.

G I TAG: 15 products of ODOP have bagged G I tag. 10 new products are under consideration. 22 common facility centres are at the different stages of getting permission.

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FUN AND GAMES

What I learnt from playing 70 sports the year I turned 70

BY Garry Moir
FROM *THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

ILLUSTRATION BY DIANA BOLTON

CALL IT A GEEZER crisis. An old man grasping for a semblance of youth. A hare-brained scheme that would almost certainly end in lack of dignity or, even worse, serious injury. But on my 70th birthday, in September 2019, I decided to participate in 70 different sports before I turned 71. The motivation? Simply to have some fun.

I had played sports as a youngster and never stopped. I live in Winnipeg and skating, curling, slow-pitch softball and the odd game of golf have long been part of my annual routine. So while it might sound like hubris, I was confident that 70 sports in one year was well within my reach.

To qualify as a sport, the endeavour would require at least some of the following: agility, strength, hand–eye coordination, or it at least had to leave me huffing and puffing. That obviously eliminated competitions such as poker, chess or hotdog-eating. My goal was not to master any of the sports, but to just give them a whirl.

Athleticism, after all, does not end at some arbitrary age. In every one of these activities, there are people much older than me who can play the game at a level I could never hope to achieve. 'Try anything once' was my motto, then move on.

Checking off skiing and skateboarding.

THE LACK-OF-DIGNITY BIT came early. Shortly after my 70th birthday, I took a crack at paddleboarding. Not a confidence builder! Family members were greatly entertained watching me first try to get on the damned board, then stand on the board and finally fall into the water before trying all over again. Lesson learnt: perseverance pays off. Eventually I stood, I balanced and I paddled. An early success.

Winter sports brought their own challenges. A pick-up game of hockey resulted in the odd collision. The old lads I was playing with couldn't always stop. The quality of play was hardly inspirational, but it was certainly fun.

Then came the attempt to teach myself the basics of figure skating. They made it look so easy on YouTube. But attempting a simple spin left me prostrate on the ice, my elbow and knee throbbing. I refused to give up. Some might call it stubbornness; I preferred self-discipline. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. In this case, I learnt the rudiments of the sport—enough to do a very short programme—and performed it for my wife and anyone else who happened to be around at the community club.

I hadn't been downhill skiing since my early 20s, so, when it came time to try, I willed myself not to fall. I didn't, but admittedly there was a tinge of terror as I headed down the slope the first time, even though it was only a bunny hill carved out of the Red River Floodway. That glorious soft March evening was capped by a beautiful Prairie sunset. A touch of paradise.

A FEW DAYS AFTER my skiing adventure, the pandemic shut down most of Manitoba. COVID-19 proved to be a significant setback to my 70-at-70 goal.

COURTESY OF GARRY MOIR

By then I had tried nearly 35 sports, including kayaking, badminton, skating and even some acrobatics on the trampoline. With virtually all sports facilities locked down, it became evident I would have to resort to my own devices if I were to keep going.

Individual sports would have to be the order of the day: running, jumping, walking. For track, I built my own high jump and hurdles. I even came up with my own version of the Scottish Highland games, tossing a makeshift caber and shot-putting a stone found in a ditch. Athletics does not have to be complicated.

Two and a half months later, Manitoba began to reopen, allowing travel to sports facilities in various parts of the province. I added pickleball and horseshoes to my list during a visit to Riding Mountain National Park; hill climbing in the beautiful Pembina Valley and swimming in Lake Winnipeg. On my little adventure, I also stumbled across Manitoba's own field of dreams. Friedensfeld has no post office, no shops and only a handful of houses. However, cut from the corner of a farm field is a pristine baseball facility with green grass, floodlights and stands for the fans. It's surrounded by (what else?) a field of corn. Of course, I grabbed a bat.

MY FAMILY'S SUPPORT was essential. My wife was on hand to photograph every event and even participated in a couple of sports so I could check them off my list. My three sons were always ready for a spirited game of something. Dodgeball, tug-of-war and beach volleyball brought the whole family together. One of the most memorable experiences was taking my nine-year-old granddaughter on her first trail ride.

Being a history buff provided an extra dimension. Evidence of sporting activity can be traced almost to the beginning of human activity. Skating has a patron saint, a form of hockey was played in ancient Greece, and Mary Queen of Scots is rumoured to have once shocked her courtiers by showing up to play tennis wearing pants. Every sport has its story.

There were some health advantages, too, to all the exercise I was getting. Each activity triggered endorphins that brought an immediate, if short-lived, high. Over the longer term came the realization that dreams are important, regardless of how far-fetched or unrealistic they might seem. As youngsters we dream of playing in the National Hockey League, hitting a home run at Yankee Stadium or participating in the Olympics. As we age, our hopes and dreams change, but one should never let them disappear. We need something to look forward to; what's better than to wake up each morning knowing there is a game to play? R

© 2021, GARRY MOIR. FROM *'COULD I REALLY PLAY 70 DIFFERENT SPORTS THE YEAR I TURNED 70?'* BY GARRY MOIR, FROM *THE GLOBE AND MAIL* (3 JANUARY 2021), *THEGLOBEANDMAIL.COM*

Why we crave junk food when we're tired

The Food-Sleep Connection

BY *Anahad O'Connor*
FROM *New York Times*

MUCH OF WHAT we know about sleep and diet comes from large epidemiological studies that have found that people who suffer from consistently bad sleep tend to have poorer quality diets: less protein, fewer fruits and vegetables and more added sugar. But these studies can show only correlations, not cause and effect. They cannot explain, for example, whether poor diet leads to poor sleep, or the reverse.

Marie-Pierre St-Onge, an associate professor of nutritional medicine at New York's Columbia University Irving Medical Center and the director of its Sleep Center of Excellence, studies the relationship between diet and sleep. Her work suggests that it is better to focus on the overall quality of your diet. In one randomized clinical trial, published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* in 2016, she and her colleagues recruited 26 healthy adults and controlled what they ate for four days while monitoring how they slept. They discovered that eating more saturated fat and less fibre from foods like vegetables, fruits and whole grains led to reductions in slow-wave sleep, which is the deep, restorative kind.

St-Onge has also found in her research that the type of carbohydrates we consume matters: When people eat

PHOTO: ©GETTY IMAGES X2

more sugar and simple carbs—such as white bread, pastries and pasta—they awaken more frequently in the night. It is best to consume complex carbs that contain fibre, which may help promote superior sleep.

"Complex carbohydrates provide a more stable blood sugar level," says St-Onge. "If blood sugar levels are more stable at night, that could be the reason complex carbohydrates are associated with better sleep."

But the relationship between poor diet and bad sleep is a two-way street: As people lose sleep, they experience physiological changes that can nudge them to seek out junk food. In clinical trials, healthy adults who sleep only four or five hours a night end up consuming more calories and snacking more often throughout the day. They experience more hunger and their preference for sweet foods increases.

In men, sleep deprivation stimulates increased levels of ghrelin, the so-called hunger hormone, while in women, restricting sleep leads to lower levels of GLP-1, a hormone that signals satiety. "In men, short sleep promotes greater appetite and desire to eat, and in women there is less of a signal that makes you stop eating," says St-Onge.

Changes also occur in the brain. St-Onge found that when men and women were restricted to four hours of nightly sleep for five nights in a row, they had greater activation in reward centres of the brain in response to pepperoni pizza, doughnuts and candy compared to healthy foods such as carrots, yogurt, oatmeal and fruit. After five nights of normal sleep, however, this pattern of stronger brain responses to the junk food disappeared.

Another study, led by researchers at King's College London in 2018, also demonstrated how proper sleep can increase your willpower to avoid unhealthy foods. It found that habitually short sleepers who went through a programme to help them sleep longer—resulting in their getting roughly one hour of additional sleep each night—had improvements in their diet. The most striking change was that they cut about 10 grams of added sugar from their diets each day.

AFTER FIVE NIGHTS OF NORMAL SLEEP, THE APPEAL OF JUNK FOOD FADED.

"An optimal way to achieve good health is through both a healthy diet and healthy sleep," concludes Dr Susan Redline, a professor of sleep medicine at Harvard Medical School. "These two very important health behaviours can reinforce each other." R

Adapted from *New York Times* (10 December 2020),
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I Am THE

FOOD ON YOUR PLATE

Oatmeal

How a Weed Grew into a Health Hero

BY *Kate Lowenstein*
AND *Daniel Gritzer*

Oats. A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.
—*A Dictionary of the English Language* BY SAMUEL JOHNSON (1755)

THAT, IF YOU can believe it, is how the venerable Dr Johnson, in what was the language's guiding reference until the appearance of *The Oxford English Dictionary* 173 years later, chose to define me. Me! Ouch. But that was then, when Scotland was indeed among the only places where humans fed on me. Thankfully for me, and for your cholesterol ratios, I've come a long way in the 264 years since. And the famed Englishman's dig at both me and the Scots now looks as foolish as his word for a burp of undigested meat. (For the record, the word is *nidorosity*.)

It has been a wild ride, and from inauspicious roots. I began as a seed that grew in pods at the tops of towering, five-foot-tall weeds called green oat grasses, which littered the wheat and barley fields of yore. About a century after Dr Johnson's diss, a German immigrant grocer in Akron, Ohio, by the name of Ferdinand Schumacher realized—long after the Scots had—that once removed from my hull, chopped and cooked, I made a fine cereal. To process me, he figured out how to steam and roll me flat so that I could be cooked more quickly. Then he experimented with selling me in his small store.

AMYLV/SHUTTERSTOCK

At first, shoppers were resistant. But when the Civil War broke out and the Union started buying me to feed its soldiers, demand went crazy. My reputation as an affordable, healthy, stick-to-your-ribs food for humans took hold. Schumacher, who came to be called the Oatmeal King, founded the German Mills American Cereal Company to (barely) keep up with demand, and suddenly this weed became a very viable crop.

In 1877, the US Patent Office received a request for the first trademarked breakfast cereal, represented by "a figure of a man in 'Quaker garb,'" chosen, according to the owners at the time, to signify honesty and good quality. That new brand, Quaker Oats, would eventually merge with Schumacher's company to become the American behemoth that today can process up to 1.6 million kgs of little old me every day.

Any shopper knows my familiar versions by name, but it's a rare consumer who can describe the somewhat confusing differences among them. I will do the honours. When my grains are steamed and rolled into flakes that cook up in a few minutes on the stove (the contents of that iconic canister of Quaker Old Fashioned), I am 'rolled oats.' 'Instant oatmeal,' meanwhile, is made of extra-small bits of 'quick oats,' which are rolled oats that have been steamed and flattened further for faster cooking speed. To produce the chewier 'steel-cut,' producers simply chop me into small, cookable pieces with blades or grinding stones, sans the steaming and rolling. Finally, in all my forms, the British call me 'porridge,' while what they call 'oatmeal' is in fact coarsely ground oat flour. As I said: confusing!

APPLE-CINNAMON OVERNIGHT OATS

Combine the following in a Mason jar or other small container: ½ cup oats; ½ medium-sized apple, chopped; 1 tablespoon raisins; and 1 cup milk. Add a dash of salt and ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon. Seal container and refrigerate overnight.

Likewise with the myriad ways I can be served. Back in the United Kingdom, I'm thought of as a savoury meal, traditionally prepared with just water, salt and a little cream or butter—or, in Ireland, brown sugar. In the United States, predictably, I satisfy both your healthy and unhealthy urges. Healthy: In any form, I contain an important type of fibre called beta-glucan, to which some of my cholesterol-lowering powers have been attributed. Heart doctors prefer me steel-cut, since that way I'm slower

GRACE NATOLI SHELDON/TOH

to digest, don't spike your blood sugar and am even more likely to lower your cholesterol. Less healthy: Americans have dessert-ified me via sugary versions filled with maple syrup and the like that put me in a class with the rest of your sweet breakfast foods.

The best way to get a perfect bowl of me has been the subject of a 25-year experiment out of the land of my most loyal eaters. In 1994, the 600-person Scottish village of Carrbridge arranged a competition among cooks in hopes of bringing their tiny town some visitors. Contestants were given 30 minutes to make the best steel-cut oats they could, using nothing more than me and some salt and water. The event was a hit and became, of all things, the World Porridge Making Championship, now attended by the oatmeal champions of the United States, Russia, Finland and more, all vying for the now-famous Golden Spurtle award. You may have read about it on a bag of Bob's Red Mill oatmeal; Bob himself was a winner.

You would think there couldn't possibly be that many ways to cook a simple grain, but the contest reveals that I have remarkable range. From chewy to juicy to tender, from nutty to carby, it all depends on the quantities of each ingredient, the water and the cook's predilections. And yet, one judge reveals that the winners have methods in common: They slowly stirred their oatmeal for the full 30 minutes of the competition, making it velvety. They all boiled me down until I was thick and smooth, finding that my best self has a pourable consistency.

Essentially, I should not stick to the spoon, or rather the spurtle. Yes, that's the kitchen tool invented solely for stirring me, pretty much a straight stick and nothing more (but I still delight in its very existence).

Dr Johnson may not have seen my popularity coming, but I appreciate all signs of how beloved I've become. In cities in the States and in Europe, there are restaurants where all you can order is me with the toppings of your choice. Imagine that. I'm now the headlining ingredient in modern-day eateries, despite having started as a meal fit only for horses. R

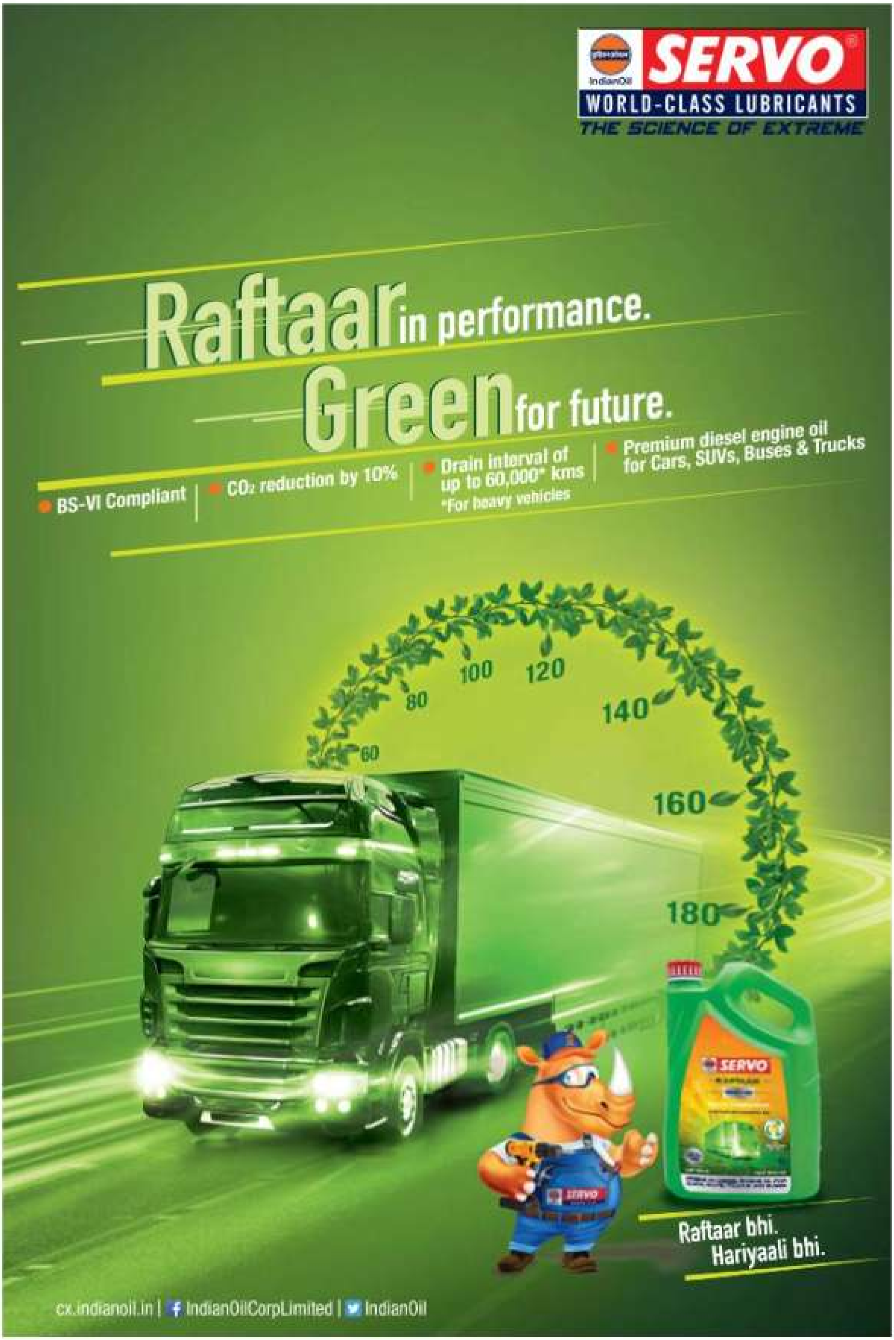
Kate Lowenstein is the editor-in-chief of Vice's health website, Tonic*; Daniel Gritzer is the culinary director of the cooking site* Serious Eats.

◆ ◆ ◆

Home Sweet Home

Home is not where you were born. Home is where all your attempts to escape cease.

OMAR TAHER, WRITER.



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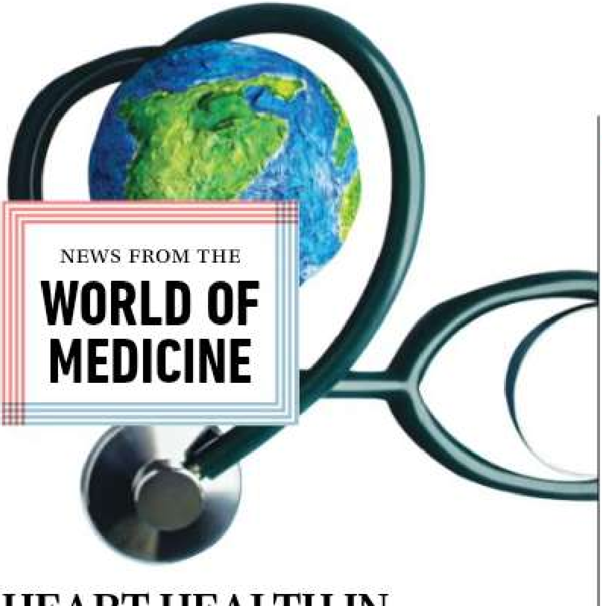

NEWS FROM THE

WORLD OF MEDICINE

HEART HEALTH IN THE SPICE AISLE

If you like to use herbs and spices when you cook, you're not just flavouring your meals—you're doing your heart some good. In an US study of adults with obesity and other risk factors for heart disease, participants who added an average of 6.6 grams of dried herbs and spices to their meals every day lowered their blood pressure. And people with type 2 diabetes who added ginger, cinnamon or turmeric to their diets lowered their cholesterol levels, another review found. One caution: Check the labels of prepackaged herb and spice mixes and avoid those with salt and sugar additives that will have the opposite impact on your heart health.

Hit the Sauna Instead of the Gym?

A Coventry University study reports that sitting in a sauna for at least 30 minutes three times a week is as beneficial as low-to-moderate-intensity exercise. Like hiking or riding your bike, using a sauna raises your body temperature, increases your heart rate, and helps keep your blood sugar at normal levels. Over time, this may lower your risk of type 2 diabetes, dementia, and heart disease. Of course, it's still good to exercise, but hopping into the sauna as often as you can is a good complement to a workout routine, and a helpful option for people who can't do regular exercise.

FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK, GOIR/GETTY IMAGES

Lower Stress with the Help of a Friend

We often think of 'fight or flight' as the common response to stress. But, according to a University of Illinois study, many women also use a strategy that researchers call 'tend and befriend.' That is, they are likely to turn to a caring female friend to talk about a problem, which successfully lowers their cortisol levels—and as a result, their stress. While this strategy is associated more with women, it can help men as well. In fact, studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and a group of international researchers suggest that male animals that form strong social bonds increase levels of oxytocin—sometimes called 'the cuddle hormone' because it's released in the brain when we connect emotionally. So the next time you feel stressed, call a friend. It might help you feel better, short-term and long.

TAI CHI TRIMS BELLY FAT

If walking on a treadmill or lifting weights seems repetitive and monotonous, consider tai chi, which offers a more fluid and graceful way to stay fit. A Hong Kong study found that this centuries-old form of exercise—often described as 'meditation in motion'—trims abdo-minal fat as effectively as conventional exercise. In fact, older adults who did tai chi three times a week for 12 weeks reduced their waistlines as much as those who did regular aerobic exercise and strength training, while also boosting their HDL, or good cholesterol.Since excess belly fat is linked to heart disease and type 2 diabetes, doing tai chi can have some important health benefits.

'Beckham Boot' Beats a Cast for Broken Ankles

According to a recent British study, a removable plastic brace—often referred to as a 'Beckham boot' after soccer player David Beckham used one to treat an injury—is as effective for immobilizing and treating broken ankles as a traditional plaster cast. The added bonus of the removable brace is that it enables patients to perform ankle movement exercises several times a day, reducing the muscle loss and joint stiffness that follow prolonged immobilization. R

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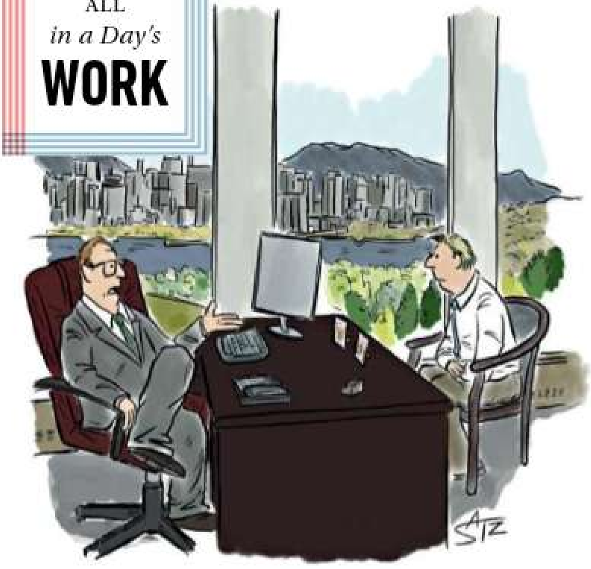
ALL *in a Day's* WORK



"I'm going to forgo all the gobbledygook and cut straight to the rigamarole."

I showed my third-grade music class a short film about composer George Frideric Handel. Afterwards, a student asked if that was really Handel or an actor playing Handel.

"Well, Alex," I said, "Handel lived way back in the 1700s. Does that give you a hint?" "Ah," said Alex, realizing his mistake. "It couldn't have been him. If it were really Handel from that long ago, the film would have been in black-and-white."

—PAULA FARINA

After completing his basic medical degree, a relative began to explore specializations that would make the most lucrative career. He contacted many doctors who offered the following advice:

✦ Cardio-thoracics offers expertise in two systems—the heart and respiration.

✦ Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) is better as it covers three organs.

✦ Dentistry best—32 teeth to attend to.

✦ Orthopaedics is best—216 bones.

When I next met him at a family event I saw him getting out of a high-end SUV.

"So you must be an ortho now and minting money!" I asked.

He grinned and shook his head. "Hair transplant specialist."

—R. RAGHOTHAMAN, *Bengaluru*

Today, a first grader told me that she doesn't need to learn what I'm teaching because she wants to be a pineapple when she grows up.

—🐦@TEACHERONTOPIC

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

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Introduction
The Right Health Choice

The Reader's Digest Trusted Hospitals Award, instituted in 2015, allows the consumer to identify India's finest private hospitals, providing the best of modern healthcare.

The public healthcare system in India falls woefully short of catering to the healthcare needs of its billion-strong population. To service demand, it's inevitable to turn to the private sector. Unlike the public healthcare sector, which suffers from government oversight, private hospitals fare better whether it is technological advantage, routine wellness and preventive healthcare, innovative life-saving treatments and diagnostic services, and meeting regulatory standards.

The *Reader's Digest* Trusted Hospitals survey looks at the best-in-class healthcare providers in 6 Indian cities. Besides measuring hospitals on their overall medical expertise and care, the survey provides a ranking of hospitals based on various speciality conditions. The Reader's Digest Trusted Hospitals Award recognizes the best in healthcare services, with the goal of helping consumers pick the gold standard when it comes to their and their family's health needs.

The award also encourages and motivates healthcare providers to focus on improving their patient care facilities, infrastructure, and cutting-edge technology to provide the best service possible.

We hope that this exercise would offer critical clues to consumers in choosing the best healthcare destination. ■

Methodology

How The Survey Was Done

The *Reader's Digest* Trusted Hospital survey conducted by Ipsos, one of the world's leading research agencies surveyed 3,600 respondents across 6 Indian cities–Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad–to identify the most trusted private hospitals in the country.

The research was split into 3 major modules: desk research, perceptual survey followed by analysis and ranking process. A comprehensive list of private hospitals was collated from the 2020 perceptual survey. Only private hospitals with at least 3 or more specialty services were included in the list. An online questionnaire was administered to selected respondents.

Respondents were asked to rank the top 5 private hospitals and select the most trusted hospital across specialties in their own city. The parameters used for rating the most trusted specialty hospitals were: capability & credibility of the doctors, hospital infrastructure, ethical practices, affordability, transparency and procedure recommendations, cleanliness and overall reputation. Respondents were asked to rate the above parameters on a scale of 1 to 5 for each most trusted hospital against each specialty.

To arrive at the final ranking, hospitals receiving less than 10 responses were excluded from the ranking, and the weighted mean was calculated, the importance of various parameters using regression was calculated to arrive at the importance of each parameter. Using weightage, the composite score for each hospital was calculated for arriving at most trusted hospital.

This survey hopes to guide patients to the right healthcare destination, without compromising on trust and faith. ■

TOP HOSPITALS: **CITIES**

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Artemis Hospital
- ★ Blk Super Speciality Hospital
- ★ Fortis Escorts Heart Institute & Research Centre
- ★ Fortis Flt Lt Rajan Dhall Hospital, Vasant Kunj
- ★ Fortis, Gurgaon
- ★ Jaypee Hospital, Noida
- ★ Manipal Hospital, Dwarka
- ★ Max Hospital, Gurgaon
- ★ Max Hospital, Saket
- ★ Medanta, The Medicity
- ★ Metro Hospital and Heart Institute
- ★ Moolchand Medcity
- ★ Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

MUMBAI

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Bombay Hospital
- ★ Breach Candy Hospital
- ★ Dr L H Hiranandani Hospital
- ★ Holy Family Hospital
- ★ Jaslok Hospital
- ★ Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital & Medical Research Institute
- ★ Lilavati Hospital & Research Centre
- ★ Nanavati Max Super Speciality Hospital
- ★ P. D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre
- ★ Reliance Foundation Hospital and Research Centre
- ★ Seven Hills Hospitals
- ★ S L Raheja Hospital
- ★ Tata Memorial Hospital
- ★ Wockhardt Hospital, Mumbai Central

TOP HOSPITALS: CITIES

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

KOLKATA

- ★ **AMRI Hospitals, Dhakuria**
- ★ **AMRI Hospitals, Mukundapur**
- ★ **AMRI Hospitals, Salt Lake**
- ★ **Apollo Hospitals**
- ★ **Belle Vue Clinic**
- ★ **B. P. Poddar Hospital and Medical Research Ltd.**
- ★ **Columbia Asia Hospital**
- ★ **Desun Hospital & Heart Institute**
- ★ **Fortis Hospitals, Anandapur**
- ★ **Kothari Medical**
- ★ **Peerless Hospital**
- ★ **RN Tagore Hospital**
- ★ **Ruby General Hospital**
- ★ **The Calcutta Medical Research Institute**
- ★ **Woodlands Hospital**

CHENNAI

- ★ **Apollo Hospitals**
- ★ **Billroth Hospitals**
- ★ **C.S.I. Kalyani Multispeciality Hospital**
- ★ **Dr. Mehta's Hospitals**
- ★ **Dr. Rela Institute & Medical Centre**
- ★ **Fortis Malar Hospital**
- ★ **Gleneagles Global Hospital**
- ★ **Kauvery Hospital**
- ★ **MGM Hospitals**
- ★ **MIOT International**
- ★ **SIMS Hospital**
- ★ **Sooriya Hospital**
- ★ **Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute**
- ★ **St. Isabel's Hospital**
- ★ **Vijaya Hospital**

TOP HOSPITALS: CITIES

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

HYDERABAD

- **Apollo Hospitals**
- **Aster Prime Hospitals**
- **Aware Global Hospital**
- **Care Hospital**
- **Citizens Hospital, Nallagandla**
- **Continental Hospitals**
- **Global Hospital**
- **Kamineni Hospital, LB Nagar**
- **KIMS, Kondapur**
- **KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad**
- **Medicover Hospitals (earlier MaxCure Hospitals)**
- **OMNI Hospitals**
- **Pace Hospitals**
- **Sunshine Hospital**
- **Yashoda Hospitals**

BANGALORE

- **Apollo Hospitals**
- **Aster CMI Hospital, Hebbal**
- **BGS Gleneagles Global Hospital**
- **Columbia Asia Yeshwanthpur**
- **Fortis Hospital, Bannerghatta Road**
- **Fortis Hospital, Cunningham Road**
- **Mallya Hospital**
- **Manipal Hospital, HAL Road**
- **Manipal Hospital, Jayanagar**
- **Manipal Hospital, Malleswaram**
- **MS Ramaiah Memorial Hospital**
- **Narayana Health, HSR Layout**
- **Sakra World Hospital**
- **St. Johns Hospital**

TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
CARDIOLOGY

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Apollo Hospitals
- Fortis Escorts Heart Institute & Research Centre, Okhla Road
- Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon
- Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket
- Medanta, The Medicity, Gurgaon
- Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Asian Heart
- Bombay Hospital
- Breach Candy Hospital Trust
- Fortis, Vashi
- Lilavati Hospital & Research Centre

KOLKATA

- AMRI Hospitals, Dhakuria
- Apollo Hospitals
- CK Birla Heart Hospital
- Medica Superspeciality Hospital
- RN Tagore Hospital

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Billroth Hospitals
- C.S.I. Kalyani Multispeciality Hospital
- Dr Rela Institute & Medical Centre
- Fortis Malar Hospital
- MIOT International

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Care Hospitals
- Gleneagles Global Hospitals
- Kamineni Hospital, LB Nagar
- KIMS, Kondapur Serilingampally Mandal
- Yashoda Hospitals

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Aster CMI Hospital
- Bangalore Hospital
- Manipal Hospital, HAL Airport Road
- Narayana Health, Hosur Road

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TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
DIABETES CARE

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Apollo Hospitals
- Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre
- Apollo Hospitals
- Max Hospital, Gurgaon
- Moolchand Medicity

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Holy Spirit Hospital
- Nanavati Max Super Speciality Hospital
- Jaslok Hospital
- Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital & Medical Research Institute
- Lilavati Hospital & Research Centre
- S. L. Raheja Hospital, Mahim West

KOLKATA

- Apollo Hospitals
- Belle Vue Clinics
- GD Hospital and Diabetes Institute
- Medica Superspeciality Hospital
- Ruby General Hospital

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Dr. A Ramachandran's Diabetes Hospital
- Fortis Malar hospital
- MV Hospital for Diabetes
- SIMS Hospital

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Aware Gleneagles Global Hospital, LB Nagar
- Continental Hospitals
- Lifespan Diabetes Clinic, Himayat Nagar
- Medicover Hospitals (earlier MaxCure Hospitals)

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Bangalore Diabetes Centre
- Bangalore Hospital
- Columbia Asia Hebbal
- Manipal Hospital, HAL Airport Road

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- Winner of **Asia Pacific Quality Organization Global Performance Excellence Best in Class Award 2016**
- Council for Fair Business Practices *(CFBP)* - **Jamnalal Bajaj Uchit Vyavahar Puraskar Award 2020 - 2021**
- **AHPI Excellence in Healthcare Award** *(National Level)* **2021**
- **CIMS Healthcare Excellence Award 2021**

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TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
ENT

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Apollo Hospitals
- BLK Super Speciality Hospital
- Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon
- Max Hospital, Saket
- Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Bombay Hospital
- Global Hospitals
- Jaslok Hospital
- Parakh Hospital
- Wockhardt Hospitals, South Mumbai

KOLKATA

- AMRI Hospitals, Salt Lake
- Apollo Hospitals
- Desun Hospital & Heart Institute
- Medica Superspeciality Hospital
- Ruby General Hospital
- The Calcutta Medical Research Institute

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Dr. Mehta's Hospitals
- Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospital
- KKR ENT Hospital & Research Institute
- Sooriya Hospital
- Vijaya Hospital

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Care Hospitals
- KIMS Hospitals
- Medicover Hospitals (earlier MaxCure Hospitals)
- Yashoda Hospitals

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Columbia Asia, Whitefield
- Mallya Hospital
- Manipal Hospital, HAL Airport Road
- Manipal Hospital, Malleswaram

TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
EYE CARE

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Apollo Hospitals
- Centre for Sight
- Eye7 Hospital
- Fortis Flt. Lt. Rajan Dhall Hospital
- Max Hospital, Saket
- Shroff's Eye Hospital

KOLKATA

- Apollo Hospitals
- ASG Eye Hospitals
- Desun Hospital & Heart Institute
- Disha Eye Hospitals
- Susrut Eye Foundation & Research Centre
- The Calcutta Medical Research Institute

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital
- KIMS Hospital
- LV Prasad Eye Hospital
- Vasan Eye Care Hospital

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Aditya Jyot Eye Hospital
- Asian Eye Institute & Laser Centre, Dadar
- Bombay City Eye Institute & Research Centre (BCEIRC)
- Kenia Eye Hospital
- Orbit Eye Hospital

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Arvind Eye Hospital
- Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital
- Sankara Nethralaya
- Vijaya Hospital

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Devi Eye Care Hospital, HSR Layout
- Narayana Multispeciality Hospital, HSR Layout
- Narayana Netralaya, Rajajinagar
- Sankara Eye Hospital
- Vasan Eye Care Hospital, HSR Layout

TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
GASTROENTEROLOGY & PROCTOLOGY

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Apollo Hospitals
- BLK Super Speciality Hospital
- Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon
- Max Super Speciality Hospital
- Moolchand Medcity

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Bhatia Hospital, Grant Road
- Breach Candy Hospital
- Fortis Hospital
- Nanavati Max Super Speciality Hospital
- P. D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre

KOLKATA

- AMRI Hospitals, Dhakuria
- Apollo Hospitals
- Fortis Hospitals, Anandapur
- Peerless Hospital
- Ruby General Hospital

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Billroth Hospitals
- Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospital
- Fortis Malar Hospital
- Kauvery Hospital

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Citizens Hospital, Nallagandla
- Continental Hospitals
- KIMS, Kondapur
- Sunshine Hospital

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Aster CMI Hospital
- Fortis Hospital, Bannerghata
- Manipal Hospital, HAL Road
- Manipal Hospital, Jayanagar

DIGITALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY WILL MAKE HOSPITALS, NO LONGER AS WE KNEW THEM

Undoubtedly, the arrival of COVID-19 forced the health system, not only in India but across the globe, to make great transformations. Surgical technologies, telemedicine and digitization became fundamental aspects for processes in the area of health.

Prof. Mohamed Rela, Chairman, Rela Hospitals expressed the view that technology will determine the future of health care between now and the next few years, and that hospitals will no longer be as we know them. "Technology, through multiple devices, will allow people to attend to their health remotely resolving problems relating to accessibility of healthcare services."

Evidently so, the use of technology at Rela Hospital is quite advanced. One area that has seen a huge step forward is the use of technology in its surgical services, with the move from open cases towards minimally invasive surgeries to robotic-assisted surgeries. The hospital deploys the world famous 'da Vinci' robot surgical suite. In fact, Rela Hospital is one of the very few liver transplant institutes in the country to use robotics for liver donor surgeries. This piece of technology is also engaged in complex gynecological and urological surgeries.

Ever since his days in the UK, Prof. Mohamed Rela had a vision of integrating healthcare services, education and research, and to build a world-class multi-organ transplant institute. To achieve this vision, the management at Rela Hospital took a four-part approach. First, provide complete, high quality, inter-profession healthcare services. Second, provide education to enhance competency and professionalism for their healthcare professionals. Third, establish partnerships with stakeholders in healthcare services, and last but not the least, maximize use of technology and digital services to better clinical outcomes and deliver best-in-class patient experience.

Another area of digitization is that use of information technology and use of telemedicine.

Digitization of healthcare has changed the ideas of telemedicine and Rela Hospital continues to adapt newer tools and technologies to address patient treatment and care. For instance, since the Covid era, there has been a drastic shift from an earlier 10 virtual consultations a day to almost 150 a day now; and the centre is well balanced to be able to manage that.

One of the main pionts that Prof. Rela highlights is, digital health cannot be seen as a goal in itself, but rather as an enabler for transformative change in health care. "We want digital health to be a tool for a more dynamic, coordinated, accessible, innovative care that can respond to the needs of each patient according to each case and giving the best clinical outcome. Digital health is not the end, it is the means for this change", said Prof. Rela

rela institute
DR. RELA INSTITUTE & MEDICAL CENTRE

TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
IVF AND CHILDBIRTH

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Aastha Hospital & IVF Centre
- Apollo Hospitals
- BLK Super Speciality Hospital
- Max Hospital, Saket
- Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Bombay Hospital
- Dr. L H Hiranandani Hospital
- Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital & Medical Research Institute
- Lilavati Hospital & Research Centre
- P. D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre

KOLKATA

- Apollo Hospitals
- Bhagirathi Neotia Woman & Child Care Centre
- Kothari Medical
- Peerless Hospital
- Woodlands Hospital

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Billroth Hospitals
- Chennai Fertility Center
- C.S.I. Kalyani Multispeciality Hospital
- Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Care Hospitals
- Kamineni Hospitals
- Rainbow Children's Hospital
- Sunshine Hospital, Secunderabad

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Cloudnine Hospitals, Jayanagar
- Columbia Asia Whitefield
- Mallya Hospital
- Motherhood Hospital

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2021
Reader's Digest

TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
ONCOLOGY

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Action Cancer Hospital
- Apollo Hospitals
- Fortis Hospital
- Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket
- Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Bombay Hospital
- Nanavati Max Super Speciality Hospital
- Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital & Medical Research Institute
- Lilavati Hospital & Research Centre
- Tata Memorial Hospital

KOLKATA

- AMRI Hospitals, Dhakuria
- Apollo Hospitals
- Medica Superspeciality Hospital
- Ruby General Hospital
- Woodlands Hospital

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Billroth Hospitals
- Fortis Malar Hospital
- HCG Cancer Center
- Vijaya Hospital

HYDERABAD

- American Oncology Institute
- Apollo Hospitals
- Kamineni Hospital, LB Nagar
- KIMS, Kondapur Serilingampally Mandal
- Yashoda Cancer Institute

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- BGS Gleneagles Global Hospitals
- Fortis Hospital, Bannerghatta Road
- HCG Group, KR Road
- Manipal Hospital, HAL Airport Road

TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
ORTHOPAEDICS

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Artemis Hospital, Gurgaon
- ★ Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket
- ★ Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

MUMBAI

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre
- ★ Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital & Medical Research Institute
- ★ Lilavati Hospital & Research Centre
- ★ P.D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre

KOLKATA

- ★ AMRI Hospitals, Dhakuria
- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ B. P. Poddar Hospital
- ★ CK Birla Hospitals (The Calcutta Medical Research Institute)
- ★ Escorts Fortis Hospital

CHENNAI

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Billroth Hospitals
- ★ Kauvery Hospital
- ★ Sri Ramachandra Medical College & Research Institute
- ★ Vijaya Hospital

HYDERABAD

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Kamineni Hospital, LB Nagar
- ★ KIMs, Kondapur Serilingampally Mandal
- ★ Sunshine Hospital
- ★ Yashoda Hospitals

BANGALORE

- ★ Apollo Hospitals
- ★ Aster CMI Hospital
- ★ Fortis Hospital, Banerghatta
- ★ Hosmat Hospital
- ★ Manipal Hospital, Jayanagar

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TOP HOSPITALS: SPECIALITIES
RESPIRATORY

ALL HOSPITALS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DELHI NCR

- Apollo Hospitals
- BLK Super Speciality Hospital
- Fortis, Vasant Kunj
- Max Hospital, Saket
- Metro Hospital & Heart Institute

KOLKATA

- AMRI Hospitals, Dhakuria
- Apollo Hospitals
- Belle Vue Clinic
- Ruby General Hospital
- Woodlands Hospital

HYDERABAD

- Apollo Hospitals
- Aware Gleneagles Global Hospital, LB Nagar
- KIMS Hospitals
- Medicover Hospitals (earlier MaxCure Hospitals)
- Yashoda Hospitals

MUMBAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Holy Family Hospital
- Jaslok Hospital
- Kohinoor Hospital
- S L Raheja Hospital
- Wockhardt Hospitals

CHENNAI

- Apollo Hospitals
- Billroth Hospitals
- CSI Rainy Multi Speciality Hospital
- Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospital
- Dr. Mehta's Hospitals
- Vijaya Hospital

BANGALORE

- Apollo Hospitals
- Columbia Asia Hospital
- BGS Gleneagles Global Hospital, Kengeri
- Fortis Hospital, Banerghatta
- Manipal Hospital, HAL Airport Road
- Vikram Hospital

Conclusion

Partners in Trust

Quality, affordable healthcare is key to a good life. Without adequate access to healthcare, people are at aggravated risk to diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp relief how life-threatening diseases can get without proper medical help and support. With the pandemic highlighting the various challenges we are battling in the healthcare sector, choosing the right healthcare provider was more critical than ever for most of us. The Readers Digest Trusted Hospital Award, is a step towards enabling our readers to make informed choices to help them get the healthcare they need.

Voted for by our readers, these award-winning healthcare providers are leaders in the sector, providing accessibility, affordability and quality. Our winners lead the charge in providing best-in-class treatments, cutting-edge technology, clinical expertise and quality comprehensive care to patients. We have also drawn up an exhaustive list of hospitals and medical centres best known for treating specific conditions and diseases, ensuring that the consumer can make the right choice, of where they can go to receive superlative treatment for their condition

The winners of the Reader's Digest Trusted Hospitals Award bear the stamp of ultimate consumer approval. Besides consistently providing accessible, effective medical services, these healthcare providers have earnt public trust by remaining steadfast to their goal of building a robust healthcare framework. Over the last six years, the Reader's Digest Trusted Hospital Award has carved a niche for itself and is now a trusted guide to seeking healthcare options. ■

FORCES FOR GOOD

Bringing care to those who need it most, these extraordinary Indians are putting humanity first

PHOTO: SUDHIR DAMERLA

To Each, a Second Chance

Thomas 'Auto' Raja, Social Worker, 54

The atmosphere is sombre this December morning at the New Ark Mission of India in Doddagubbi, north of Bengaluru city. Six residents—all of them elderly, terminally-ill and alone in the world when they first arrived—had passed away the previous night. People speak in hushed tones; the air is still. Only the voice of Thomas 'Auto' Raja, New Ark's founder, cuts through, dissipating the gloom. "It is a large number, even for us," he says while waiting for the mortuary vans to arrive and other formalities to be completed.

Despite the sadness, the burly, bright-eyed 54-year-old seems able to find some acceptance in the knowledge that at least the Ark was able to offer the departed some dignity in their last days. Otherwise, "most of them would have died on the streets before being discovered by municipal workers," he says.

Thomas Raja's New Ark Mission cares for over 750 homeless people.

In 2022, Raja will complete 25 years in the service of the homeless and destitute in the city of Bengaluru. The Ark's large facility at Doddagubbi is home to 750 people, each of its three floors serving as a large dormitory. Lined in rows, the beds—some still in their bare metal frames—indicate room for more residents. As Raja walks the halls, a fragile, elderly woman, looks up and smiles at him in greeting. He goes over to those who call out to him and shares a quick chat in either Kannada, Hindi or Tamil.

"I named the Mission New Ark after Noah's Ark," he says, inspired by the Old Testament story. Biblical Noah may have been one of blameless piety, but not Auto Raja. In school, he was a bully, robbing classmates of their pocket money; his after-school activities included petty theft or gambling with people much older to him. He dreamt of becoming a don in Bengaluru. "I think I was like that because I never got love from my parents," he says. He was kicked out of school, and his parents asked him to leave the house when the complaints from their neighbours and his victims became intolerable. He was in his late teens at the time.

"THIS IS MY WAY OF BECOMING WORTHY OF THE SECOND CHANCE I WAS GIVEN."

Raja ended up in Chennai where he recalls robbing his place of work and even the home of an elderly couple who were kind enough to shelter him. They caught him in the act and handed him over to the police. Thirty days in prison as an undertrial changed Raja's life. "It was hell. I realized this was not the life I wanted. I prayed and prayed, asking God to show me a way out, a way to atone for my sins," he recalls.

Once released, Raja was determined to make a change. He took to driving an auto rickshaw for a living in Bengaluru and became an active member of the auto union, participating in many protests against unfair practices. Though he did end up in jail again, it was never again for misdemeanours like theft and burglary. Despite the 360-degree transformation, Raja was still unhappy. One day, he came upon a semi-clad woman, sleeping next to a public urinal on the streets of Bengaluru. "She was covered in filth, and people were holding their noses when they walked past her. Her very existence was offensive to them. When I went to her and held her hand, she smiled. It seemed like it had

PHOTO: SUDHIR DAMERLA

T. V. Ravi Kumar donated his ₹80-lakh inheritance to the Ark, where he now works as a security guard.

been a very long time since somebody had considered her a human being and touched her," he recalls. That turning point led him to bring other homeless people he met to his house. Here, he fed and bathed them, tended to their wounds. Now the volunteers at the Ark do the same. Having started with 13 people in a rented house, Raja later expanded and built a separate home for disadvantaged children.

One of the more remarkable effects of Raja's work is in the way he inspired others to give. One noteworthy example is T. V. Ravi Kumar, who is now a security guard at the Ark. Turned away by his brothers after returning from a mental-health facility, he found a home with Raja. When his brothers sold off family property in the city, Kumar's share came to ₹80 lakhs. He poured the entire amount into the Ark's account. He also refuses to take a salary for his job. "That money is worthless for me. I don't know what to do with it. Here, I have a purpose and I am treated with respect," Kumar says.

Raja's vision for the Ark is that it be a home where the poorest of the poor—regardless of age, gender or religion—are given a chance to live a purpose-driven life. "We have brought pregnant girls here who were as young as 12. We brought in women in their twenties and thirties who had mental-health conditions and were living on the streets. Most of them have recovered and they are now volunteers at our home," he says.

Of his decades-long journey, Raja says, "My family once suffered greatly, and I didn't take care of them. But this is my way of becoming worthy of the second chance I was given. This is God's mission, and He chose me to serve these people. I don't regret a single second of it."

—By V. Kumara Swamy

A Safe Haven for Seniors

Dr Mahalaxmi Iyer, MD, **60**

It all started when she was young, says Dr Mahalaxmi Iyer. She always knew she wanted to be a doctor. And once she was a doctor, she felt her work should be the kind that would leave a mark. "Otherwise everybody is born, they grow up, do their jobs, get married, have children, right? But I wanted to make a lasting impact," Iyer says. Though her career as a healer had certainly helped others, it was the loss of her parents within a span of 10 months when she was in her mid-30s, and later, of her parents-in-law, too, which brought a sinking feeling—she had not been able to do enough for them, that her time with them was cut far too short.

The idea that looking after other seniors would help ease the grief of her own losses gave Iyer a renewed focus. She sold her home, secured a massive loan and invested all her life's savings to start Balaji Healthcare, a multi-speciality hospital and eldercare home on the outskirts of Mumbai. Surrounded by unspoilt greenery near the Bhatsa river in Vasind, the 100-bed facility that opened its doors in 2011 with four patients, has since grown to accommodate 74 residents. Many of them have chronic illnesses like schizophrenia, dementia, Parkinson's and hemiplegia, all of which require full-time, expert care that Iyer says families are unable to provide. Together with her staff, Iyer—who lives on the campus with her doctor husband—takes care of the residents' daily healthcare needs, other specialists, like a psychiatrist and physiotherapist, visit to aid treatment.

"I faced many hurdles. But once you are clear about what you want to do, I believe the universe hears you," says Dr Mahalakshmi Iyer.

PHOTO: MANDAR SURESH DEODHAR

"I faced many hurdles. But once you are clear about what you want to do, I believe the universe hears you. And there are many people who will also offer support," Iyer says, referring to the financial troubles she faced while setting up the facility. The difficulties only eased by 2015 when well-wishers stepped up to bolster the initiative.

They don't run like a charity, Iyer stresses, but do not charge exorbitantly either, often footing additional medical bills themselves before charging the families. The model works because "these are not children who want to shun their parents," she adds. They are simply looking for a warm, reliable home. And such options aren't available in plenty. As per the last census, India had about 103 million elderly citizens, a number that is expected to rise to 319 million by 2050. And yet, according to a study by the Tata Trusts, Samarth, and the United Nations Population Fund, the country is estimated to have only about 1,150 facilities with the capacity to house around 97,000 seniors.

Working with the elderly also means always being prepared for the unpredictable. It has taught her to be practical, she says. "You simply have to learn how to not get too attached." And yet, a lot of her work is based on just that—feelings, good faith and a protective instinct. It could mean making room for a 92-year-old woman at a few hours' notice based on frantic phone calls from a worried son-in-law who lives abroad. Or it means grieving with a family at the sudden death of an affable, chatty resident who spent his final days at the facility with his wife and 46-year-old autistic daughter.

Today, a decade after the facility was set up, Iyer takes great solace in the fact that it isn't just providing a sense of security to residents and their families but also to the staff, most of whom are from neighbouring villages and largely female. Many of them are now able to afford two-wheelers, their own house, and better education for their children. It is, after all, these caregivers who help Iyer create a haven where fragile and vulnerable seniors can feel safe.

During COVID-19, Iyer was able to ensure all her elderly residents were protected from infection and vaccinated safely. Having put a dependable system in place, the doctor is finally making time for herself at the age of 60—learning how to swim and ride a cycle, running half marathons. She admits that until now, work has been her life, often leaving little time even for her daughter as she was growing up. "But I don't regret it. I wanted to do it." She wishes more people thought the same way, devoting their time and money to initiatives like hers. "Then we will have no problems. No war, nothing. It'll be an ideal world," she says, laughing.

CARING FOR SENIORS TO HELP EASE HER OWN LOSS GAVE IYER A RENEWED FOCUS.

—By Sarita Santoshini

Deprived of sight at six months old, Mahantesh G. K. went on to tour England as a cricketer and head the World Blind Cricket Council.

Belief in Ability

Mahantesh G. Kivadasannavar,
Sportsman, **51**

If you're a cricket fan who's never heard of Mahantesh G.K., the loss is yours. This 51-year-old Bengaluru resident has many feathers in his cap—from touring England in 1998 as a cricketer to heading world-class organizations that are changing the lives of aspiring cricketers, both men and women, especially in rural areas.

Mahantesh loves a well-executed cover drive or perfectly pitched delivery like any cricket enthusiast. But what makes him stand out is the fact that he is blind. When he was six months old, typhoid deprived Mahantesh of his sight. But his adoring parents never let it come between him and his dreams. Since the village in Belgaum, Karnataka where the family lived didn't have a school that would admit a child like theirs, they moved Mahantesh to Bengaluru, where he got a fine education and cultivated his love for the game. Early on, Mahantesh says, he was encouraged to cultivate his "belief in ability". He embraced that spirit with all his heart and went on to head the World Blind Cricket Council and, in 2011, co-found the Cricket Association for the Blind in India.

But there's no denying the role of sheer good luck in Mahantesh's life, especially in a country where persons with disabilities (PwDs) face

PHOTO COURTESY: MAHANTESH G. K.

the brunt of discrimination, not least from their own families. According to the 2011 census, India has some 21 million PwDs. But the actual number is likely to be 60 to 70 million. Despite affirmative action and laws on equal opportunities, PwDs continue to face discrimination when it comes to pursuing education, employment or, simply, a full life. These challenges get compounded by discrimination based on caste, class, gender, and sexuality.

"School made me completely independent and brought about a total transformation," says Mahantesh. "I imbibed life skills. From a special school, I moved on to a regular college [to do an MPhil]." And so, "the urge to do something for the visually impaired, disabled and underprivileged regarding education and jobs" became a key driver in his life. In 1997, Mahantesh took a step towards realizing this goal, when he co-founded the Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled with his friend, L. Nagesh.

Samarthanam is more than just a conduit for education and employment, though. One of its projects, Kirana, has secured jobs for hundreds of rural blind and disabled youth. Several of its alumni have gone on to get MBAs or become chartered accountants. But Samarthanam's larger vision is to bring dignity and joy to the lives of PwDs. And that includes giving them a chance to play competitive sports like cricket.

Mahantesh and his organization's unrelenting support has enabled the blind men's cricket team to win the T20 world cup in 2012 against Pakistan. Two years later, the boys from India defeated the neighbours again in a one-day international world cup. The Karnataka blind women's team, founded in 2019, drew in talent from the districts, helping many women to not only break the taboo of gender but also that of their 'disability'.

EARLY ON MAHANTESH WAS ENCOURAGED TO CULTIVATE HIS "BELIEF IN ABILITY".

Since the onset of COVID, Samarthanam has doubled down on providing logistical and medical support to PwDs. "We joined hands with the Indian Railway Tourism and Catering Corporation to make 70 stations accessible for [PwDs] to commute with minimum external assistance," Mahantesh says. "I envision Samarthanam to touch 10,00,000 lives by 2030 ... make [them all] taxpayers of India."

—By Somak Ghoshal

Healing through Joy

Sonal Kapoor, Child Rights Advocate, 36

Even after all these years, Sonal Kapoor remembers the incident vividly. Out on a film shoot in 2010, the former advertising and communications professional met a young mother of six who was pregnant with her seventh child. Burdened with crippling intergenerational poverty, she was reduced to sending one of her minor daughters out for sex work. This shocking act of sheer desperation moved Kapoor into action. In three weeks, she began an arts and design centre from a single room in a West Delhi slum with the idea of creating change through the power of positive reinforcement, skill development and creativity. Today, her organization, Protsahan India Foundation, has transformed the lives of about 81,000 girls. "That encounter was almost 12 years ago. But it always takes me back to why we do what we do," she says.

The central premise of Protsahan is this: "Can we put children who've

"One of the things that keeps me going is that I don't operate from a lens of sympathy or charity. Sympathy comes from a position of power," says Protsahan's Sonal Kapoor.

PHOTO: RAJWANT RAWAT

faced deep childhood violence and trauma on a journey towards healing? Can we strengthen their neural pathways with hope and joy? How do we achieve that?" Kapoor says. They do that through a unique empathy-based approach she calls 'HEART.' This approach seeks to empower girls and adolescents who have either experienced traumatic events and adverse childhood circumstances or are at risk of the same through 'Holistic healing, Education, Art, Recovery, and Technology'. Protsahan provides a 10-month holistic bridge course to integrate out-of-school or drop-out girls into formal schooling. While education is non-negotiable, these children also "need a lot of art and life skills in their lives". So, they learn how to use computers, and are also provided classes in meditation, photography, filmmaking, dance movement therapy, Mandala art, among others. "They offer a sense of safety and creativity which are the simplest things that can help a child," adds Kapoor.

This approach of intersectional care has meant that Protsahan's work isn't limited to one sphere but instead addresses multiple needs based on the child's circumstances. During COVID lockdowns, Kapoor's team worked across the country to provide thousands of hot meals, dry ration kits, and train frontline workers on psychosocial support so they could truly reach children at the last mile.

Working with local communities has also been key. The idea, she says, is to look beyond the ambit of their own organization. "The ideal world will be when we (as an NGO) no longer need to exist, and we are okay with it." Protsahan aims to impact the lives of one million girls by 2030.

The sector was never short of challenges and these have been compounded by the funding crunch and logistical hurdles of the pandemic years. Aware of the "compassion fatigue" that caregivers face, Kapoor believes in taking care of her team, whether it means ensuring fair wages or asking all of them to take off in the last week of the year.

"One of the strongest things that keeps me going is that I don't operate from a lens of sympathy or charity. I think that sympathy comes from a position of power," Kapoor says. "But it's empathy that really requires you to get down on your knees and look somebody in the eye and realize that this could be you, if not for random luck."

—By Sarita Santoshini

"CAN WE PUT CHILDREN WITH TRAUMA ON A JOURNEY TOWARDS HOPE AND JOY?"

Anup Surendranath began to look deeper into the death penalty in India after the execution of Afzal Guru.

PHOTO COURTESY: ANUP SURENDRANATH

In Defence of the Condemned

Anup Surendranath, Lawyer, 40

"None of us is born evil," says Delhi-based lawyer Anup Surendranath. "Who we become is a product of our upbringing and the circumstances in which we live."

It's certainly a sobering sentiment to live by, but hard to inculcate when faced with perpetrators of heinous crimes. Think of the six men involved in the brutal rape and death of 'Nirbhaya' in 2012. Or the many others like them, before and since, who have ruined lives and families. Even self-avowed liberals and social-justice warriors struggle to uphold the right to life enshrined in the Constitution, while reckoning with a certain class of criminals. Much less, the enraged citizens who take to the streets demanding death for these offenders. Public outrage and indignation at such crimes makes it that much harder for people like Surendranath to fight for unpopular reforms.

In 2012, Surendranath had just returned to India, armed with a doctorate from Oxford University, to teach at the National Law University in Delhi. But his career took a turn the year after, as India executed Afzal Guru who had been convicted of involvement in the 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament by Kashmiri separatist gunmen. Within hours of then President Pranab Mukherjee rejecting an appeal for pardon, Guru was hanged. Struck by the swiftness of the move, Surendranath resolved to look deeper into the death penalty in India. Along with a group of lawyers, he launched Project 39A, which published the path-breaking *India Death Penalty Report* in 2016.

"We knew so little about [death-row prisoners]—and still continue to [do so]," Surendranath says. Project 39A interviewed a cross-section of the 500-odd prisoners on death row since 2004, as well as members of their families, to understand the crimes, criminals and the biases that may have crept into the investigation and trial procedures.

Unsurprisingly, most of these prisoners are from marginalized or underprivileged communities, unable to afford the best lawyers, and always in mortal dread of the police. Many of them were the principal bread-earners in their families who are left destitute and ostracized by their communities. The court proceedings, often conducted in a language and jargon beyond their comprehension, leaves them helpless and resigned to their fates.

By documenting the stories of these 'cold-blooded criminals', reviled as 'monsters' by society, Project 39A undertook judicial activism beyond debating the fine print of the law. Their recent *Deathworthy* report, for instance, in association with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, takes a mental health perspective on the death penalty. Over 60 per cent of the death-row prisoners interviewed for the report were found to be suffering from mental illness, while 11 per cent had intellectual disabilities.

Surendranath believes that India will find its path to joining the league of 140 countries that have abolished the death penalty runs via persistent and unrelenting judicial and social activism.

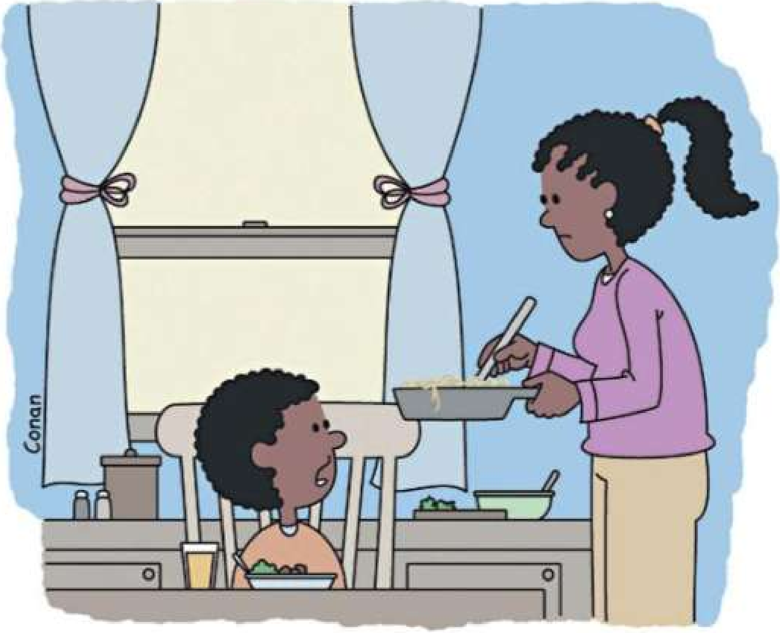
"WE KNEW SO LITTLE ABOUT [DEATH-ROW PRISONERS]—AND CONTINUE TO [DO SO]."

In a recent case, for instance, lawyers from Project 39A successfully got a 52-year man from Bulandshahr—who was on death row for eight years, accused of murdering several members of his family—released from prison. While hearing the case, the Supreme Court upbraided the lower courts for sentencing him on the basis of shoddy evidence—resulting in nearly a decade of prison time, and almost the end of his life.

It's never too late to undo a wrong—or to save a life.

—By Somak Ghoshal

AS KIDS SEE IT



"You had me at caramelized, but lost me at onions."

My four-year-old granddaughter was pretending to enjoy a piece of make-believe cake. When her older brother, who is allergic to nuts, asked for his own pretend slice, she quickly responded, "No, you can't have any. It has nuts in it!"

—JENNIFER KHAN

My six-year-old, to her crying brother: It's OK to be sad. Sometimes we need to let our feelings out. Just let yourself be sad.

Me: Oh darling, that's so lovely. Well done. Why is he crying anyway?

My six-year-old: I hit him.

—🐦 @ELSPELLS13

My friends and I were talking about how older people lose height with age, and my four-year-old son overheard the conversation. He interrupted, "If I live to be 200, will I be an ant?"

—ADELINE SYDOR

My six-year-old son was watching me pour drain

CARTOON: CONAN DE VRIES

cleaner down the bathroom sink.
My son: What's that?
Me: It dissolves whatever gunk is clogging up your drain.
My son: Cool. Even the screwdriver down there?

—*REDDIT.COM*

While walking in a local park with my three young kids, we passed a bench that had been donated by a family in 1992. I heard one of them say, "I wonder if that family is still alive."

My 10-year-old daughter responded, "Probably. I'm pretty sure Dad was already born in 1992 and he's still alive!"

—ALBERT KANDIE

My toddler dropped my phone while she was on a video chat with my mom. She gasped, quickly picked it up and asked, "Grandma, are you OK?"

—🐦 @NOT_THENANNY

When I was four, I thought birdseed grew birds, hence the name. So I thought I'd try planting a pile of birdseed. The next day, there were loads of birds where I'd planted the seeds, proving me right.

—🐦 @EXILEGRIMM

My daughter asked me if grown-ups ever cry. I sat down with her, hugged her and explained that grown-ups do cry and that we, too, sometimes feel scared, sad and angry.

She then asked me if grown-ups pee.

—🐦 @HELLO_CAITLIN

My son cried on his second day of kindergarten because he didn't know he had to do it every day. He thought it was one-and-done.

—*REDDIT.COM*

My five-year-old asked me to help her write something. She was making a birthday card … for me. I wrote it all for her. She then hid it and gave it to me some time later—and I had to act surprised so as not to hurt her feelings.

—🐦 @JOHNOFJOHN

My son described my job as "Mama sit, Mama type."

—BESS KALB, *writer*

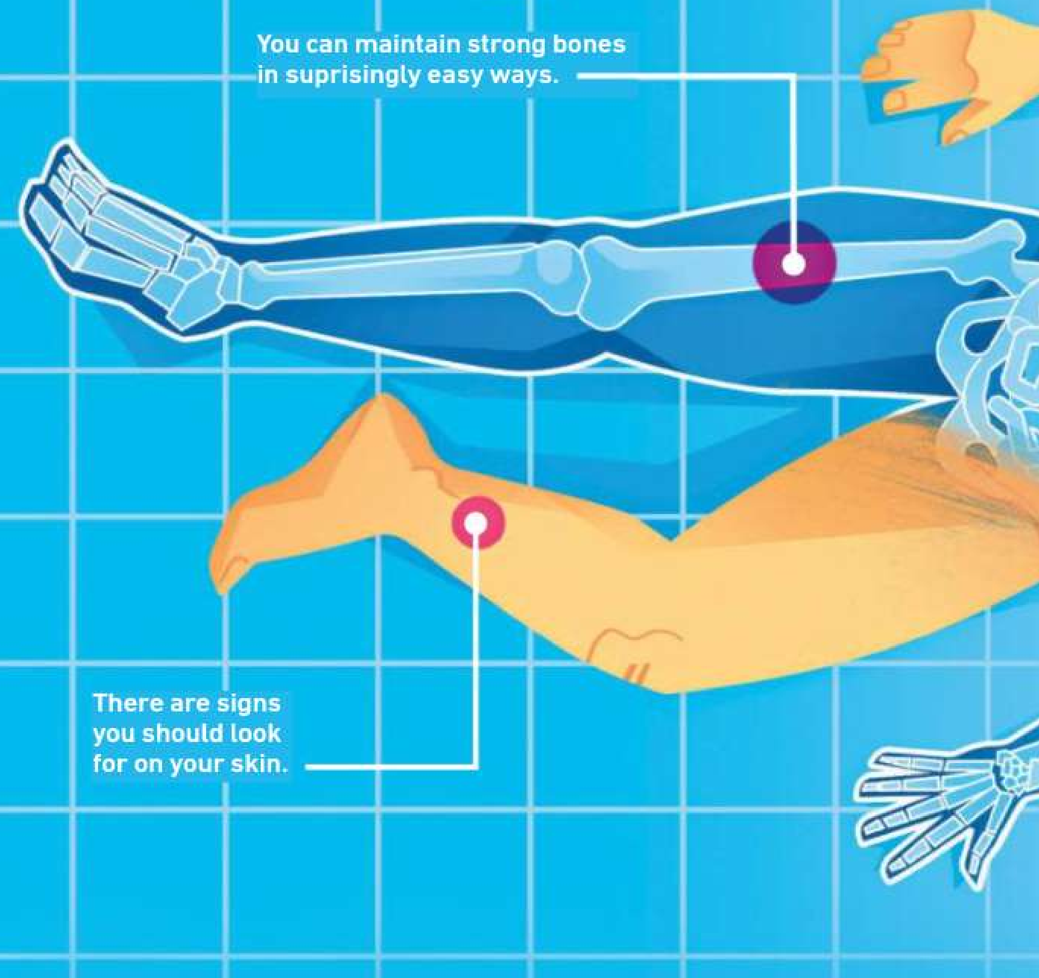
I asked my kids if there was anything they wanted from the grocery store. My daughter's response: "How is our cheese situation?"

—🐦 @CROCKETTFORREAL

My eight-year-old, watching golf on TV: What's hard about that? There's not even an obstacle course in front of it or anything.
My 12-year-old: You're thinking of miniature golf. This is real golf.
My eight-year-old: Well, it looks easy to me.

—*REDDIT.COM*

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

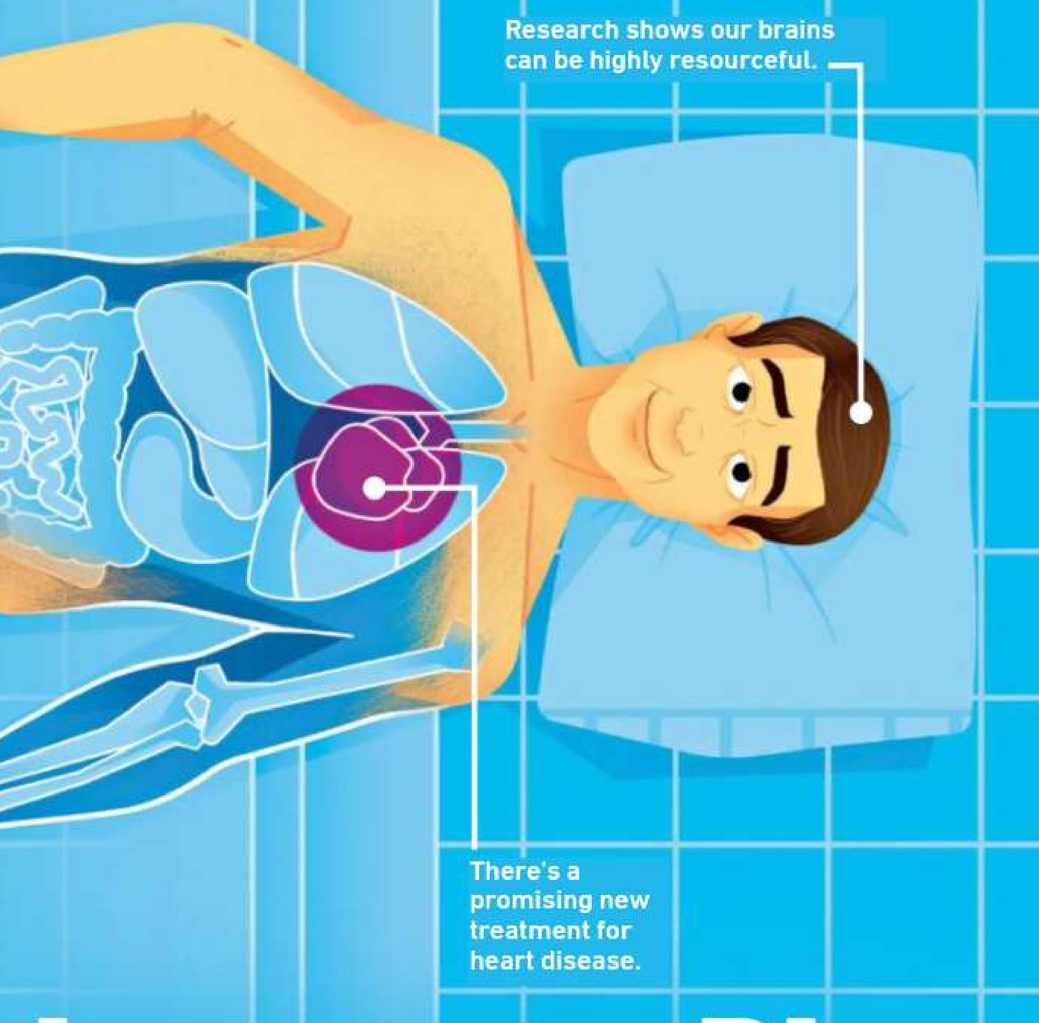


You can maintain strong bones in suprisingly easy ways.

There are signs you should look for on your skin.

Your Body: A Ma

From head to toe and inside out,



Research shows our brains can be highly resourceful.

There's a promising new treatment for heart disease.

intenance Plan

here's how to age well

BY *Lisa Fitterman*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Victor Wong*

Remember when we were young and thought we'd live forever? We are, in fact, living longer, but time still takes its toll on our bodies, from extra kilos to wrinkles and aches. Our hearts may not pump as well as they once did, and there are leaks, fading vision, so-called 'senior moments' and maybe even a cancer diagnosis.

Like a machine, everything in our bodies is interconnected—and the bits and pieces eventually malfunction. Dr Berndt Kleine-Gunk, a gynaecologist and head of the German Society for Anti-Aging Medicine, suggests we think of the human body as a basket of apples in which one rotten specimen can infect the others. In medical terms, these 'rotten apples' are called senescent, or zombie, cells, because they continue to age but stop dividing and refuse to die. As they accumulate, they contribute to everything from age spots to cancer.

In other words, rather than cells that divide and spark health, "we've got zombie cells eliminating it," says Kleine-Gunk. "That's why scientists are looking at what happens when zombie cells can be removed from the body before they cause damage."

With 727 million people over the age of 65 in the world—a number expected to jump to 1.5 billion by 2050—scientists are making significant strides in the field of gerontology, with better diagnostics and more advanced treatments. Kleine-Gunk points to the number of startup companies working on drugs that either suppress the damaging molecules that zombie cells secrete or kill them outright.

He also mentions clinical trials in the United States collectively known as TAME, which stands for Targeting Ageing with Metformin, a drug used to treat Type 2 diabetes. The trials came about when researchers found that patients taking metformin outlived non-diabetics, and that, in separate studies, it had a preventative effect on dementia, heart disease and cancer.

Does all this point to a fountain of youth? "Not so much as a potential fountain of *health*," says Kleine-Gunk. "Possibly within five years."

So, because knowledge is power, what can we expect as we get older, and how do we make the best of it?

THE HEADQUARTERS: OUR BRAIN

When we are young, our brain is resourceful and resilient. Even after a

The key to brain health is to take on challenging activities, like navigating a strange city.

stroke, it can find new pathways to take over damaged areas. Think of it as a factory that's producing, storing, discarding and recycling data, including what Kleine-Gunk calls 'microbiological garbage'.

"But as we age, that data starts to accumulate and work less effectively," he says. "It's a bit like those messy apartments on television shows about hoarders. You try to step over or around the accumulation, but it can be too much." One of the effects is dementia, for which there is no cure.

Still, in the last few years, scientists have found that the more engaged and curious we are, the better we can fend off dementia's effects for longer periods. "You may be able to do one complicated thing and do it well, but the key is to challenge yourself to do different activities—to navigate a strange city or to force your feet to move in unfamiliar ways," says Dr Gérard Nisal Bischof, a cognitive neuroscientist at the Institute for Neuroscience in Cologne, Germany.

There is also good news for women experiencing lower mental sharpness as they hit menopause. Dr Caoimhe Hartley, who runs Menopause Health in Dalkey, Ireland, notes that the 'brain fog' is likely temporary. "Your brain is just adapting to a different hormonal environment," she says.

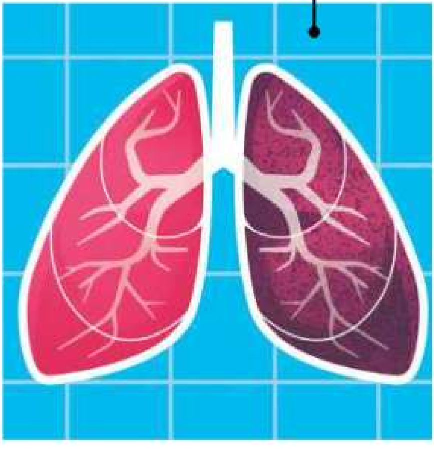
THE ENGINES: OUR HEART AND LUNGS

Quick: Which of these are heart attack symptoms? A) Nausea B) Shortness of breath C) Sore jaw D) Chest pain E) All the above.

If you answered 'E', you're correct. Women are more likely to experience the sore jaw and nausea, but any of these could be a sign that blood flow to your heart is blocked. While heart attacks can occur at any age, the risk for men increases starting at 45, and for women, at 55. Usually, it's because of arteries clogged by cholesterol and plaque, and slackening cardiac muscle that pumps less effectively.

That weakening muscle is also why the chance of suffering a stroke doubles every decade after age 55. There are two kinds of stroke: ischemic (the most common), which occurs when a major blood vessel in the brain is blocked; and hemorrhagic, when a blood vessel bursts in the brain. Along with age, risk factors include smoking, being sedentary and obesity. As with many health conditions, lifestyle changes can lower your risk.

It's never too late to quit smoking, because lungs can repair themselves to an extent.



"Old age is when bad habits and genetics come home to roost," says Dr Vernon Williams, director of the Center for Sports Neurology and Pain Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe Institute in Los Angeles.

Life expectancy is rising, so turning 100 won't be so unusual in coming decades. "This means that while ageing, people will want to stay healthy," says Williams.

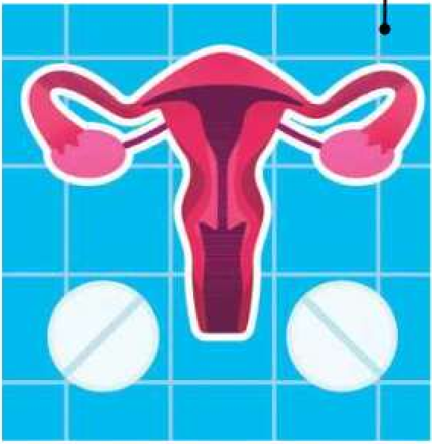
Experts agree that genetics aside, the biggest threat to our heart and lungs is smoking. Inhaling a toxic chemical stew hotter than molten lava can lead to incurable chronic obsessive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease and lung cancer. Plus, it increases blood pressure, a major cause of heart attack or stroke.

Williams stresses that it's never too late to quit smoking because lungs can repair themselves to an extent. "And exercise," he adds. "When you participate in sports, you exercise the lungs and breathe more intensely, and the heart has to beat quicker to make sure the blood supply is there." It's a workout that pays double dividends.

THE PLUMBING: OUR GENITOURINARY SYSTEM

For men and women, a common side effect of ageing is incontinence: a bit of leakage when you laugh, or a sudden urge to go. This is because our

> **Claims about the negative impact of hormone replacement therapy have been mostly debunked.**



kidney tissue decreases as we age, affecting function. Simple exercises such as contracting the pelvic floor muscles can help. Drugs are also used to calm overactive bladders, as are topical oestrogen creams, which may help rejuvenate atrophied tissue.

For a woman, menopause can come with hot flashes, night sweats, irritability, insomnia, vaginal dryness and a low sex drive. The good news? Claims about the negative impact of hormone replacement therapy (HRT)—which came under fire in 2002 when the first results of a major US study suggested that it contributed to breast cancer, blood clots and strokes—have been mostly debunked. Further research and reviews of that study show that when prescribed to women in perimenopause or early post-menopause, HRT generally has a beneficial effect on the cardiovascular system and mortality.

The ingredients and delivery methods have improved, too. "The formulas are bio-identical to what we produce in our bodies and are now applied through the skin as a gel or a spray, which makes absorption safer and more effective," says Hartley.

For men, age can often bring prostate problems. The gland starts to slowly grow around the age of 25, which is normal. But by the age of 50, if it becomes too enlarged, it will press on the urethra, making urination difficult. Experts suspect hormonal changes are responsible, but don't know for certain. What is known is at the first sign of a change, you should see your doctor, who can check for cancer and determine next steps.

THE FRAMEWORK: OUR MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM

Bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons and cartilage hold our bodies together. As we age, they begin to break down from use. For example, cartilage, which cushions our joints, begins to tear, causing osteoarthritis. The condition, with which bone can end up rubbing against bone, is irreversible but can be managed through increased physical activity, weight loss or pain medication, for example.

Hartley warns that 50 per cent of women over the age of 50, many of whom remain undiagnosed, will face osteoporosis, a disease that thins and weakens the bones, making them brittle. "It'll increase the risk of fracture, can make you shorter and you can lose mobility," she says.

But osteoporosis isn't just a postmenopausal women's disease, says Williams. It affects millions of men, too, even if they have larger skeletal frames and don't go through extreme hormonal changes. The US Centers for Disease Control and Protection reports that five per cent of men aged 50 and over have the disease.

"Consider this, too: 33 per cent of men over 50 have low bone density, or osteopenia, which is often a precursor to osteoporosis," he says. "There are several risk factors, including family history, certain medications and lifestyle habits."

As with most things, prevention is key. Eat healthfully. Do weight-bearing workouts to build up muscle mass, which helps protect your bones and get a bone scan. If a problem is detected, your doctor may prescribe drugs to slow, or even stop, bone loss.

THE PROCESSING CENTRE: OUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

There are fewer changes here, except that everything moves more slowly, and the stomach, which is less elastic, can't hold as much food. Chances are significant that you'll develop some degree of lactose intolerance because the digestive tract tends to produce less lactase, an enzyme needed to digest dairy foods.

Stomach ulcers are common over age 60. They develop when digestive juices damage the stomach lining; irritants include alcohol, coffee and smoking. Also common are burping and acid reflux, because your oesophagus

Osteoporosis affects millions of men, even if they have larger skeletal frames.

has become less responsive. Call your doctor if the problem persists; it could be a symptom of something serious, such as oesophageal cancer.

And then there is celiac disease, a condition in which gluten triggers an immune response, impeding absorption of nutrients in the small intestine. Celiac was once thought to be a children's disease but is increasingly diagnosed in older adults because it can go undetected for years. "I spend half my day convincing people to get tested for celiac," says Hartley. "They could be losing weight, for example, or tired." There is no cure, but the condition can be controlled by eliminating gluten from your diet.

THE WRAPPER: OUR SKIN

Even shriveled, our skin is our body's largest organ: On average, it weighs between 3.5 and 10 kilograms and spreads over 1.5 to two square metres. As we age, it becomes thinner and less elastic because we lose collagen and elastin, proteins that make it soft and smooth. It damages more easily and heals more slowly due to slower blood circulation and, for women, decreased hormone production.

Most of us will have brown age spots. Caused by sun damage, the spots may lead to skin cancers; watch for new moles, or changes in old ones, as well as patches that crust, ooze or bleed. A biopsy may be necessary to determine if removal through cryotherapy or excision is required.

According to Kleine-Gunk, the skin is just like the brain. "The accumulation of microbiological garbage—from pollution, sunlight and other factors—affects our ability to heal and fight disease."

Here's the bottom line: The more we explore, exercise and rest, the better off we'll be. And there's a bonus: The occasional glass of quality red wine can't hurt either, says Williams, as it contains resveratrol, a chemical thought to aid longevity and health. For most people, he adds, "I'm all for it." R

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Childish Things

Ah babies! They're more than just adorable little creatures on whom you can blame your farts.

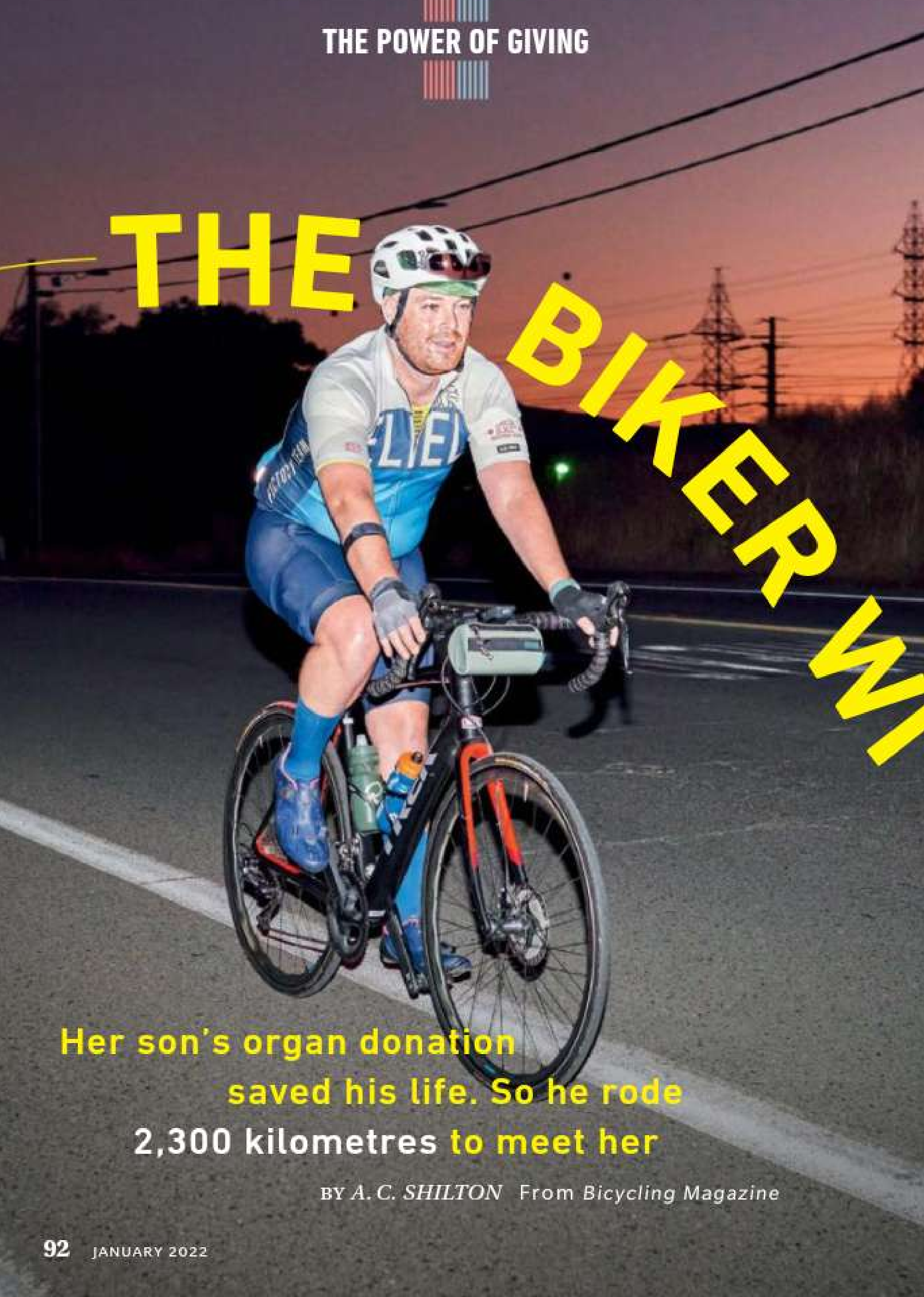
TINA FEY

You cannot let your parents anywhere near your real humiliations.

ALICE MUNRO

Never lend your car to anyone to whom you have given birth.

ERMA BOMBECK



THE BIKER WI

Her son's organ donation saved his life. So he rode 2,300 kilometres to meet her

BY *A. C. SHILTON* From *Bicycling Magazine*

Pedal Mafia

Mike Cohen, left, with Christine and David Cheers.

TH A BIG HEART

IT TOOK SEVERAL

drafts to get the letters right. To distill her boy's life into the two dimensionality of words on paper. To paint a picture of someone full of energy and love, so that the beneficiaries of his death—the recipients of his organs— would know just how lucky they were.

Three weeks earlier, the thread that held Christine Cheers's world together had been ripped away. On 21 February 2018, someone on the other end of the phone had said the words that bring parents to their knees: "There's been an accident."

Her son, James Mazzuchelli, 32, a flight surgeon with the United States Navy, had been injured in a helicopter training mission at a military base in California. If she wanted to see him while he was still alive, she needed to get on the next flight from Florida—and she needed to pray.

James was still breathing when Christine and James's stepfather, David Cheers, arrived at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, California, the next morning. Machines were keeping him alive, and the doctors told Christine that what she was seeing was likely his future—that her scuba-diving, world-travelling, overachiever of a son was never going to wake up. He would never breathe on his own. He would never smile at her again.

It was time for Christine to honour the spirit of a man who had switched from studying commerce engineering to medicine because he wanted to help people. It was time to make her

PHOTOS, PREVIOUS SPREAD: JOHN FRANCIS PETERS (LEFT), CHARLOTTE KESL (RIGHT)

Mike setting out on his cross-country journey.

PHOTO: JOHN FRANCIS PETERS

very worst day a stranger's best one.

Christine instructed the hospital to begin the organ donation process. These few words, as hard as they were to say, would soon ripple outwards, allowing a man to return to work, a military veteran to regain his health and an ailing cyclist to get back on his bike.

Mike Cohen was just 18 when he'd been diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukaemia in 2004. Doctors warned him that the treatment protocol could cause lasting damage to his heart. At the time, surviving cancer seemed like the more pressing concern. He took his treatment seriously, doing the radiation and chemotherapy and even moving from New York to San Diego, California, for his last year of chemo because his oncologist felt that mild weather would be easier on his body. The risk had paid off—two years after his diagnosis, he was cancer-free. And the move had been a good fit, too. As soon as he was healthy enough to get outside, he was hiking or riding his bike. A casual cyclist as a kid, Mike became bike-obsessed.

To celebrate his sixth year without cancer, Mike decided to ride his bike cross-country to New York. From the start, it was a grind.

What he didn't know during that ride was that his heart was beginning to fail, and in the years that followed, his health continued to deteriorate. Even on days he didn't ride his bike, he always felt tired. Then one evening in 2017, he started having chest pains.

His brother, Dan, rushed him to the emergency room, where doctors discovered a clot the size of a golf ball lodged in his left ventricle. They tried blood thinners, but the clot wouldn't budge. Soon hospital staff were preparing him for open-heart surgery to install a left ventricular assist device (LVAD), which would do the pumping that his heart couldn't accomplish.

The implanted LVAD required constant access to an electrical outlet, which meant Mike was literally tethered to the indoors by a cord that ran out of his abdomen. Even with an emergency backup battery pack, "You couldn't go out in public because you couldn't trust that someone wouldn't knock into the cord," he says. His old active life seemed like a thousand lifetimes ago.

Doctors had told him the device could work for eight months or eight years. Six months later, though, Mike was in a San Diego hospital with another clot. His heart was failing. He would need a new one.

Heart transplant priority lists are tricky. You have to be sick enough to truly need the new organ but not so sick you can't withstand the lengthy surgery or the immunosuppressant drugs heart transplant patients take to sustain the new organ. Mike fit those parameters and was at the top of the list. Now he just had to hope he survived the wait for a new heart.

> "THE OLD HEART WAS LIKE A TWO. THIS HEART IS A TEN."

On the plus side, Mike's blood work showed the clot had dissolved enough that he could safely go home. As he packed his bag on 24 February, a nurse walked in. "I have good news and bad news," she said. Mike asked for the bad news first. "You're not going home today," she said. The good

James Mazzuchelli loved adventure, serving in the Navy, and helping others.

FROM TOP: PAT HEINE/BICYCLING MAGAZINE. COURTESY CHRISTINE CHEERS

news? They'd found him a heart.

The next morning, Mike woke up in a hospital bed with a new heart beating in his chest. His energy seemed to improve immediately: He took his first steps around his hospital room just five days later and was walking the hallways shortly after. "The old heart was like a two. With the LVAD my energy was like a five," he says. "This heart is a 10."

After two weeks, he was sent home with instructions to report to cardiac rehabilitation, where he was limited for the first few days to slow walking on a treadmill. Across the room he spied a stationary bike. He knew he wasn't ready yet, but it became a beacon. And two weeks later, with his doctor's permission, he threw a leg over and soft-pedalled.

Christine Cheers wasn't leaving the hospital until every last one of her son's organs left the building.

She and David watched hospital employees carry coolers from the operating room: his kidneys, pancreas and liver went to various recipients. His corneas went to an eye bank; tissue and bone went to tissue and bone banks. That left his heart.

"That was the one I cared about most," Christine says. As a serviceman and physician, James embodied the ideals of bravery and altruism. "James had such an amazing heart," she says.

When a hospital representative delivered the news that James's heart was headed out of the hospital, David and Christine watched as the cooler was taken away.

In the ensuing weeks, Christine descended into a grief so deep that climbing out seemed impossible. Her lone consolation, she knew, would be to find out that James's organs had helped people. That the recipients were doing all right. So she wrote each recipient, at least the four she knew of, a letter.

The part Christine wanted to get right was the one about what organ donation had meant to her son. How glad he would be that his heart and kidneys and tissue were helping others. She didn't want the recipients to feel guilty about the heft and gravitas of the gift they'd gotten. On 19 March, Christine put the final copies of her letters in the mail.

Two months after his surgery, Mike Cohen got a call from the organization that had coordinated the transplant. There was a letter for him. When he got it, he unfolded the typewritten pages and took a breath.

Christine described her son's love for serving his country and the fact that he considered everyone a friend and never judged a soul. He was selfless, she wrote, had a quirky sense of humour and was a brilliant and gifted doctor. She described his love for scuba diving, snowboarding and motorcycles.

As he read Christine's letter, Mike began to understand just how special his new heart was. Eager to know more about James, Mike googled him. Except for the fact that Mike shaved his head and had a beard—James had had a full head of hair and was clean-shaven—they had a lot in common. They were both athletic, and practically the same age. James was 32 when he died, while Mike had turned 33 on the very day of James's accident.

Another thing he learnt about James: He was buried in Jacksonville, Florida.

Back in rehab, Mike had hatched a plan to take another cross-country trip as soon as his doctor said it was okay. The end point of that ride now came into focus. He wanted to pay his respects in person. It seemed fitting to make the journey by bike—to show just how transformative his new heart was.

He took his time before responding to Christine: a week to process her letter and another week to compose his own. He wanted to get the tone just right, to accurately express how grateful he was for James's heart and how determined he was to keep

PHOTO: COURTESY MIKE COHEN

PHOTO: JOHN FRANCIS PETERS

Left: Mike recovering from the operation. Right: Mike and Seton (left) on the road beside the RV that trailed them.

it beating for years to come. He communicated his desire to stay in touch with James's family, if that's what they wanted.

Of the four letters Christine had sent, she got a response to two. The first was from the man who got one of James's kidneys and his pancreas. He thanked her, saying how the organs had changed his life—that he could go back to work and provide for his family. But his letter subtly hinted that the thank-you note was all the contact he wished to have.

Mike's letter was a balm for a wound that Christine felt would never heal. And so began the emails and texts, which proved comforting to her. She even began avidly following Mike's Instagram posts. "Knowing he was doing well really helped," she says.

By September 2018, Mike was back to riding and building up his mileage. His physicians were impressed by his progress and his cautious approach, so much so that they ultimately gave their blessing for the cross-country ride he was planning for the following year.

The trip would be slow in order to not overstress his heart and immune system: four hours of riding a day maximum, keeping his heart under 150 beats per minute—doctor's orders.

Mike recruited Dan (who had become certified as a medical assistant so he could care for Mike after his first open-heart surgery) to tag along in an RV as support. Then Mike asked his friend Seton Edgerton to ride with him. They figured the trip, starting from the cardiac ward at the San Diego hospital that treated Mike and finishing at James's grave, would take just under two months. They would bike most of the way and ride in the RV only on the busiest highways.

"As cliché as it sounds, I wanted her to know that James's heart was in a safe place," says Mike, shown here with Christine.

When Mike announced on social media that he was riding to his donor's grave site, the Cheers family decided they would meet him there.

It was only day one of a 2,300-kilometre bike trip, and, as with his first cross-country trip, his heart was not cooperating. Perhaps he hadn't eaten enough or hydrated properly. Whatever the cause, it didn't really matter. What mattered was that he had to keep his heart rate under 150 beats per minute, but the steep Cuyamaca Mountains east of San Diego were sending it sky-high.

Seton had rigged Mike's heart-rate monitor so he could see the readout on the computer attached to his bike's handlebars as they rode. He watched helplessly as the beats-per-minute number shot up. Both men were thinking to themselves: *This is just the first day. Should we even be attempting this?*

But on they rode. Across Arizona and then on to Texas, Mike and Seton rolled along in matching blue jerseys, the struggles of that arduous first day behind them as Mike's heart rate settled down. Still, somewhere in the desert, they took a wrong turn and ended up slogging through deep sand. In the first 1,600 kilometres, they got a combined 24 flat tires.

From Florida, Christine and David followed along on social media, worrying about traffic and dogs and all the things that can befall a rider in the middle of nowhere. A few times, when Mike and Seton couldn't find roads suitable for riding, they detoured on to an interstate highway, causing Christine to wince at the thought of trucks whizzing by those boys—and that heart. If it had been her son, she might have called him and scolded him. But Mike wasn't her son; he was a stranger with her son's heart.

On 20 November 2019, Mike and Seton pedalled the last few kilometres of their trip. All Mike could think about was what a gift it was to be healthy. He had doubted his body for so long, but now he finally felt that there could be a normal life ahead.

As he got closer to the cemetery, Mike grew nervous, unsure what kind of emotions may be attached to meeting strangers who had already come to mean so much to him. "It's just such an intense moment to share with

PHOTO: CHARLOTTE KESL

someone I've never met," he says.

Christine and David Cheers got to the grave site early. They wanted some time alone with their son before Mike arrived. It was a perfect day: sunny and warm. Then Mike and Seton coasted into the cemetery and rode towards the couple at James's grave.

Mike got off his bike, handed it to Seton, and walked straight to Christine. At a loss for words, he managed a quiet "Hi."

MIKE SILENTLY TOLD JAMES HOW THANKFUL HE WAS FOR HIS SACRIFICE.

In that moment, Christine felt a deep sense of calm, as if she'd known Mike her entire life. They folded into a deep hug. Then came the tears. They weren't tears of grief. They were tears of relief, from a mother who knew she'd done right by someone she'd deeply loved, and from a grateful man who'd been accepted by the family whose worst day was his best.

Together, the two then walked the few steps to James's headstone. Mike squatted down and took a deep breath, feeling the strong pulse of James's heart in his chest. Silently he told James how thankful he was for his sacrifice and how sorry he was they'd never get to be friends. He promised to take care of his heart.

Someone ran back to the RV to grab the stethoscope from Dan's medical kit. Christine slid the cold metal head underneath Mike's blue jersey and listened. She shifted the instrument up and then down and a little to the left.

And there it was, loud and clear. The best part of her son, still very much alive. R

From *Bicycling Magazine* (24 January 2020).
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What Not To Say

A fun thing to do when someone enters the elevator is to calmly say to them "I was murdered in this very elevator exactly one year ago"

—@MARLEBEAN

Probably the worst thing you can hear when you're wearing a bikini is 'Good for you!"

—@ELIZABAYNE

THE REBEL'S MANIFESTO

Actor Naseeruddin Shah says he has been resisting authority since he was a little boy. As he talks more about his craft, likes and dislikes, we see why going against the grain comes so naturally to him

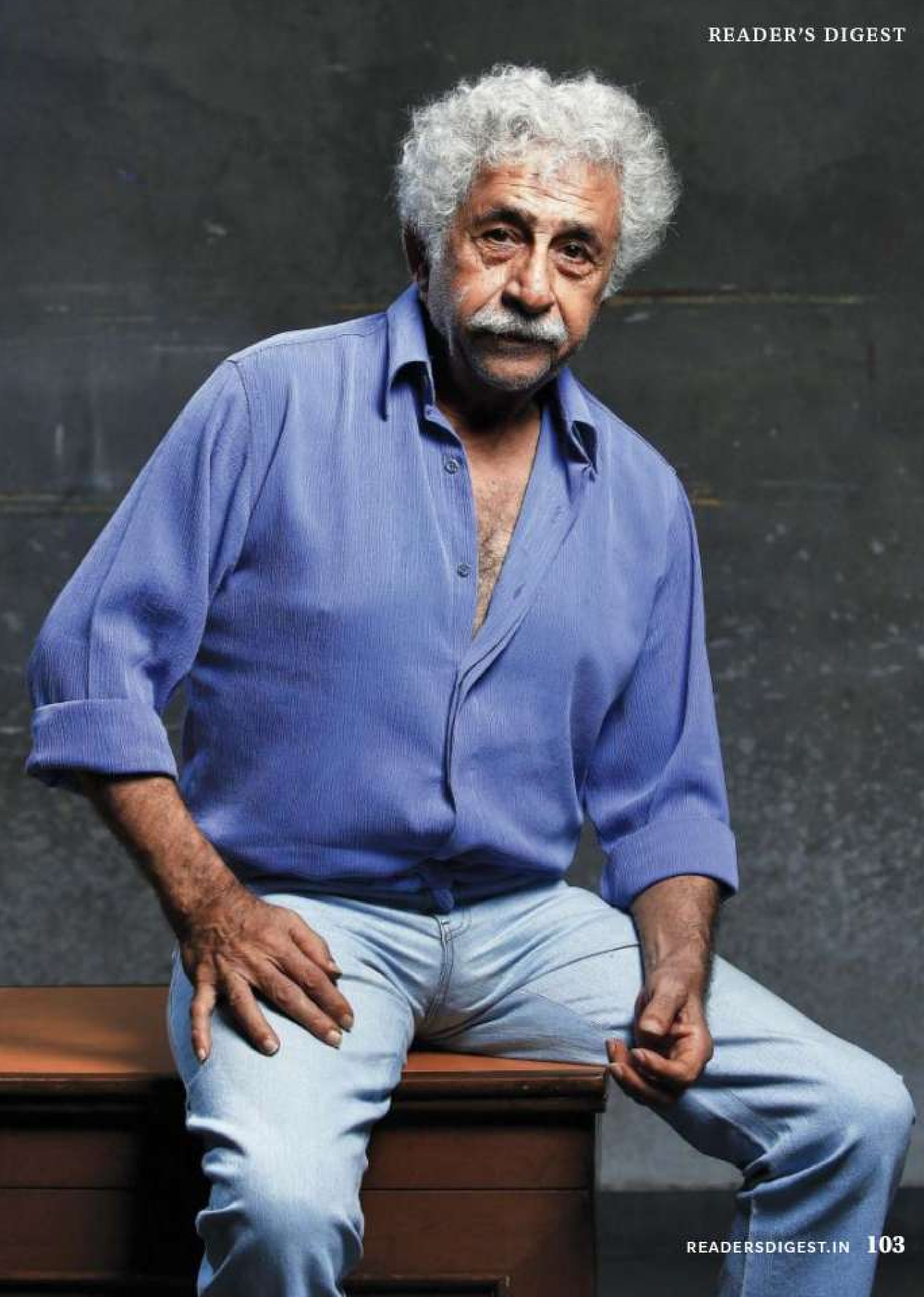
BY *Shreevatsa Nevatia*

Having been in the industry for 50 years, do you ever feel trepidation about how a new show or film will be received?

I should correct you. I have been in this industry for some 48 years. It'll only be 50 years in 2025. I did my first film, Shyam Benegal's *Nishant* in 1975. I was still studying at FTII [Film and Television Institute of India] when Girish Karnad, who was then director of the institute, recommended me for this film. I was lucky enough to get this part. Many actors were vying for it but they were all too good looking. (*Laughs*) What I thought would be my weakness helped me get my breakthrough.

I was really delighted because I suspected I wouldn't be in demand for the heroic kind of parts that Hindi movies demand. And the thought of playing a sidey part would offend me because I saw so many great actors—Shriram Lagoo, Nilu Phule, Utpal Dutt—all reduced to playing caricaturish roles. I never wanted to play those kinds of parts. I was lucky to

PHOTOGRAPH BY *Danesh Jassawala*



get a leading part right away with my first movie.

I felt trepidation while doing *Nishant* because I realized that if I messed this up, that would be the end of the story for me. I had a reputation of being sort of troublesome. Shyam had cast me against a lot of advice. But I had really resolved I wouldn't let this go. I was very, very cautious, and was on my best behaviour. I would be reading my scenes well into the night. I realized then that nervousness was something that strikes actors who are not prepared. But to answer your question—I've felt trepidation when I have had to do song-and-dance numbers in films, but otherwise, no, not so much.

Where did this troublesome reputation come from? Would you not take to authority very well?

Ram Guha, who encouraged me greatly in the writing of my memoirs, feels I have an inborn resistance to authority. (*Laughs*) But yes, looking back, it does seem that I have liked rebelling against authoritarianism. Whether it was my dad, or the teachers in school, who were pretty severe on us. These were the Irish Christian Brothers. Walloping a kid was fairly normal—slapping, kicking, punching, pulling the ear, all that happened. And we took it. We felt teachers were allowed to do this. I often felt the urge to hit back, but I knew what it would result in. Maybe that urge is where it comes from. Maybe that's why people still think of me as this rebellious character.

You were speaking about preparedness earlier. Given the regularity with which your face the camera, does Naseeruddin Shah disappear more easily into his character now?

I have learnt over the years that it is not an actor's job to disappear behind a role. In much the same way as you can identify a painting or a dance performance or a piece of poetry, I don't think there's any harm if the performance by an actor is identifiable. It should just not be repetitive, and if it is, that repetition should not get in the way of the text. It's, perhaps, too much to expect an actor to be so physically different from part to part that you don't ever think it's this actor playing the role. I can only assume that one of the reasons why Daniel Day Lewis has now hung up his boots is because of this. How long can he keep drastically altering his personality, and emotionally investing so heavily in every part? I have often received this compliment—"We only saw the character and we didn't see you". I honestly think that has more to do with the writing. The writing in these instances is so impactful that it's getting through despite the kind of acting you may have seen the actor do before.

Your next series, *Kaun Banega Shikharwati*, is a comedy. Would

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Shah, playing the Subedar in *Mirch Masala* (1987).

PHOTO: IMDB/ © NATIONAL FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.

you agree with the claim that not enough people are writing good comedies anymore?

They never were. I don't know why people can't see the humour in their own lives, and why they always draw upon caricatures of the West. We just haven't found an indigenous sense of humour. It seems we are either only mocking one person's disability or mocking the physical appearance of another. The Parsi, for example, is always an object of ridicule. The Sardar, till recently, was also precisely that. The Muslim was always the sacrificing good friend who would give up his life in the end. The Christians were always drunkards. This was all cast in stone. So, we fall back on the traditions of the past. Now, who do writers who want to make funny films today have to fall back on? They only have the likes of Johnny Walker and Keshto Mukherjee. Luckily, we actors had a Balraj Sahni and a Dilip Kumar. In Bengal, there was Pahari Sanyal. In Tamil and Malayalam industries, there were other actors, too, who were considered great. If they hadn't been there, we—Farooq Shaikh, Shabana Azmi, Om Puri and I— would never have had the courage to attempt what we did. The next generation—Irrfan and his peers—has certainly gone beyond us. They are much savvier than we were. They are more cinema-literate. They understand the medium better, and they are much more skilful than we were at their age. So, each generation feeds from the last one. Comic writers, sadly, have nothing to feed on.

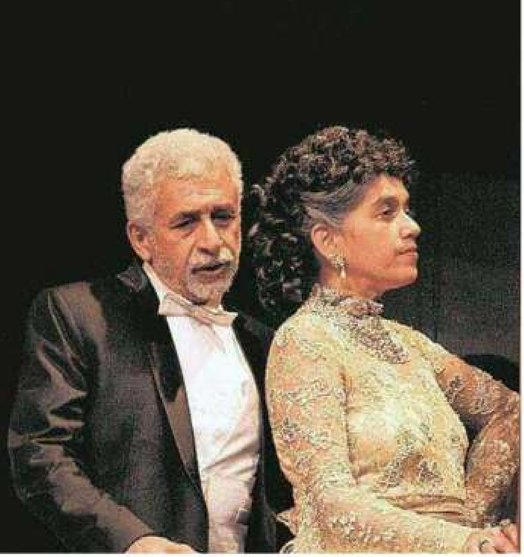
***Kaun Banega Shikharwati* releases on Zee5. *Bandish Bandits* streamed on Amazon Prime. Much is now made about how the advent of OTT has revolutionized entertainment. Your thoughts?**

OTT is certainly now in the process of revolutionizing the way in which we watch movies and also of revolutionizing the way in which they are being made. Take my example. I've done five or six shorts—all quite wonderful movies. They were made by kids who were only about 25 or 26 and had absolutely fantastic ideas. They didn't have to face the pressure of a producer sitting on their heads or the pressure of a Friday release, box-office collection, etc. So, a lot of them, I think, have been encouraged. They maybe now feel empowered to attempt something beyond the conventional. Plus, the OTT shows are encouraging young filmmakers to explore unconventional and thought-provoking content. Also, so many marvellous actors have appeared. So many technicians, so many editors are getting employment, all of whom are so deserving as they have always done such a good job.

You recently said you have done everything you wanted to do as an actor. What motivates you to go to work now?

The fact that I still love movies deeply. They were my first flights into fantasy. I think I saw my first movie when I was four years old. It always transported me somehow. I can't quite believe I've spent almost 50 years of my life in this business. There are times when I wonder if all this has been a dream because I've lived my life exactly the way I had wanted to. Sure, I've had my ups and downs, but I don't think I would have been this happy if I were in any other profession. So, here's what keeps me motivated—if it's a part exactly like the one I have done before, or if it's content like what I have done before, I don't take it. Also, If the content doesn't say anything beyond the obvious, I don't do it. I still turn down quite a bit of work, and

Naseeruddin Shah in a still from Shyam Benegal's *Mandi* (1983).



Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah in Motley's production of *Dear Liar*

yet I'm overloaded. I thank my stars for that because I've been extremely busy, even after lockdown. OTT really has given actors of my age group tremendous exposure.

When you think back to films like *Nishant*, *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* and *Mandi*, do you ever feel nostalgic? Do you ever regret that no one seems to be making films like that anymore?

A lot of the time they make better films today. Those 70s films were good, they served their purpose, but they're often overrated. What they did is that they gave the next generation something to build on. Filmmakers today are equipped with better craft than makers of the 70s and 80s. For instance, they have more of an empathetic attitude toward actors. Whereas, early in my career, I could sense this hostility between directors and actors. As a result of all this, I find much better performances are now coming forth. Actors like Vijay Raaz and Gulshan Devaiah are surprising you with every performance they give. And for that, the directors must surely also get some credit.

Is there a sense of community that unites the film industry? Has that camaraderie been eroded?

People are all fence-sitters in the industry. We are the greatest hypocrites in the world. We sing of Hindu–Muslim fraternity, but I don't think we believe in it. The fact is that there is perhaps resentment at the realization of how much the Muslims have contributed to the film industry, since the time it began. The Parsis and the Marathis were the pioneers, but the Punjabis and Muslims came in very quickly. One can't think of a single department of the film industry in which the Muslims were not heavily involved—production, direction, music, writing, carpentry, light boys, you name it. Everywhere you go, you hear Muslim names being yelled out. There was Mohd Rafi, Mehboob Khan, etc., etc., and now, of course, there are the three Khans. But from what I can see, some kind of attempt to replace them is on. I will clarify that I don't know much about this industry, that I don't have any friends who belong to it, and I never mingle with these people. But, yes, it does look suspiciously like the powers-that-be want to work to control this industry and utilize it in some way.

In 2007, you acted in the Pakistani film *Khuda Kay Liye*. You are soon going to be seen in a Bangladeshi sci-fi film called *Project Ommi*. How exciting are these South Asian projects?

I haven't shot in Bangladesh before, but I am looking forward to it. Lahore, I did shoot in, but that was about 20 years ago. I visited Lahore several times after that, and I always had great fun over there. We also performed our plays there several times at the Faiz Foundation. To say that they are the most hospitable people in the world is a cliché. Everybody knows that. Incidentally, I did another Pakistani film in Punjabi in 2013, which wasn't that much seen. It was called *Zinda Bhaag*. The thing is that they have made so many bad films for so many years that they're really struggling. They are trying to forge a new idiom, but the thing is that they are at it. They'll come up with something, I'm pretty sure.

Om Puri and Naseeruddin Shah in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004)

You'd speak with Irrfan often during his last days, but what was acting with him like?

His technique was invisible. He didn't waste time sitting by himself or clutching his forehead. There was none of that getting-into-the-zone kind of nonsense. He would act normal when he was with us and then when the moment came to walk into the acting space, there was a transformation. It was quite something. I really envied the seeming lack of effort. I think it had something to do with his normal confidence. He had this right from the start. He always had this ease. He never acted like it was a matter of life and death, but that said, I do think that he took it all extremely seriously.

What was it like to contract pneumonia at a time the world was still gasping from COVID?

It was scary because I feared it might be COVID in disguise. But the doctors, I knew, would not have kept me in the

(Left to Right) Ravi Baswani and Naseeruddin Shah in *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983)

PHOTOS: FILM STILLS

hospital if it was. It was odd. I remember deciding to get my life in order. Let's just say it was timely reminder.

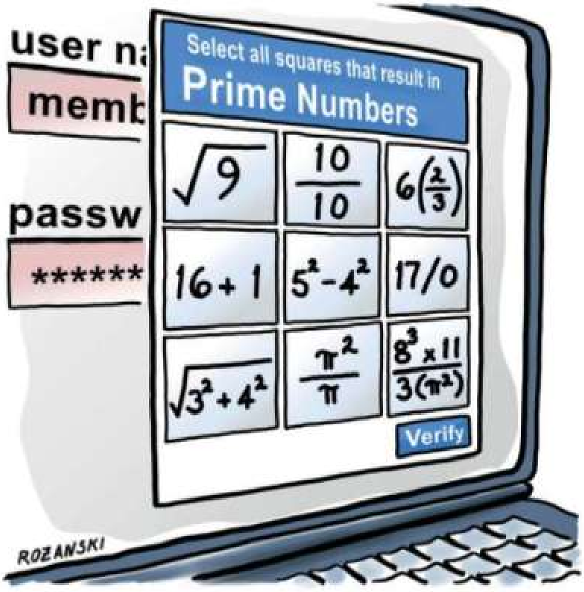
How has the pandemic affected your theatre group, Motley?

You never do think anything is final till it actually goes on the floor, and I had a couple of things stewing which I wanted to get working on. But it's been two years and none of them has happened. I hope to get them moving now. More than Motley, the pandemic hit theatre owners really hard. In Mumbai, theatres have only been allowed to open to 50 per cent capacity and Prithvi is the only one that has opened. It's affecting everyone—theatre groups, theatre owners, the light-hire people, the set-hire people. It looks grim.

You remain engaged in public discourse despite the threat of controversy. What drives you to keep speaking up and speaking out?

The concern, I suppose. Even though that concern gets interpreted as fear. I definitely don't want to sound like a persecuted Muslim saying I am scared in this country. Also, I've never said that, but, yes, that line gets attributed to me time and again. I have never said I'm scared. I did say I feel concerned about my children, but that's all. So, what drives me to keep speaking is that I think if you don't speak up, you are a collaborator. If there is something you feel strongly about and you don't speak up, then you're approving of what's going on. It's important to say what you believe. R

LIFE'S
Like That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Love Thy Family!

✦ **My sister in** law got my daughter a doll that sings and blows bubbles and I can't wait for revenge. I mean my niece's birthday.
—🐦@ITSMEBEEGEE07

✦ **The Roomba** keeps going past a piece of garbage without picking it up. It's one of the family now.
—🐦MONMAJESSIEC

✦ **I'll photoshop** my youngest into old pics just to make him stop crying about not being a part of the family before he was born.
—🐦@MARLEBEAN

✦ **Sure visiting** family can be hard but it's also the most efficient way to explain to your partner why you are the way you are.
—🐦@KARIASSAD

I was standing on the subway when the woman seated in front of me got up. As she exited, I spied a glove where she had been sitting. Grabbing it, I ran to the door, shouted, "Miss, your glove!" and tossed it to her on the platform just as the doors slammed shut. Pleased with my good deed, I sat back down. That's when I felt a tap on my shoulder from the woman sitting next to me. "That," she said, "was my glove."
—JUDITH TEDINO

Before my wife became pregnant, I always assumed Braxton Hicks was a country music artist.
—🐦@THEDADVOCATE01

CARTOON BY *Alan Rozanski*

A random home inspection revealed low levels of carbon monoxide leaking into my sister's home. She got it resolved, but our mother couldn't help asking the obvious: "Why didn't you have a working carbon monoxide detector?"

"We did," my sister said. "But it wouldn't stop beeping."

—FROM REDDIT

When Grandpa died, my mother and aunts decided he deserved a new suit for his burial. Off they went to JC Penney, where a salesman helped them pick out the perfect outfit. Smiling broadly, the salesman told them, "Today is your lucky day. This suit comes with *two* pairs of pants."

—JACK MOSS

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

SHUTTERSTOCK

Questions my cat still hasn't answered: "Who's a cat?" "Are you a cat?" "Are you the littlest girl?" "Are you the sweetest potato?"

—@CAPEYBARA

GOOD QUESTION

✦ **Six-year-old** (finishes dinner): What's for dessert?
Me: We don't always have to have dessert.
Six: Then why have dinner at all?

—@XPLODINGUNICORN

✦ **My son and I were** walking in the cemetery when we came upon an ornate mausoleum. New to reading and interested in words, my son pointed to the name carved at the top and asked, "What does that say?"

I told him the family name: "Eaton."

Now horrified, he responded, "By what?"

—AUDREY MALDONADO

✦ **After we passed the** same off-ramp for the third time, it was clear that I was lost. My little girl asked, "Daddy, do you know where you're going?"

"No," I said.

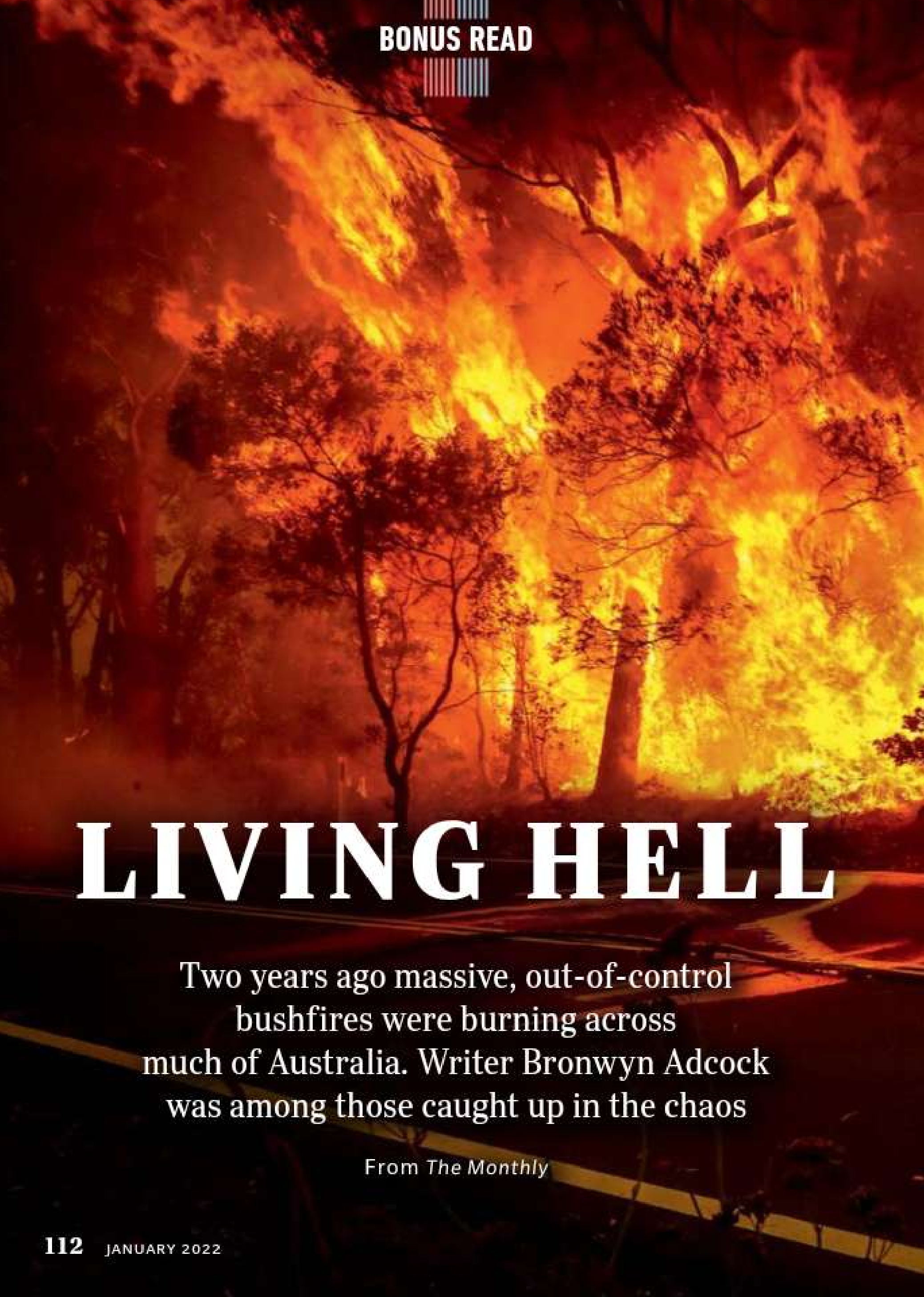
Her reply: "Then why are you still going there?"

—DAVE ARANDA-RICHARDS

✦ **(My seven-year-old** staring at my face)
Me: What is it, sweetie?
Seven: Is my nose weird, too?

—@THISONESAYZ

BONUS READ



LIVING HELL

Two years ago massive, out-of-control bushfires were burning across much of Australia. Writer Bronwyn Adcock was among those caught up in the chaos

From *The Monthly*

FIRE & RESCUE
NEW SOUTH WALES
NEW SOUTH WALES
FIRE
RESCUE HAZMAT

The Gospers Mountain fire consumed a vast expanse of land north-west of Sydney.

PHOTO: ©DAVID GRAY/GETTY IMAGES

ONE AFTERNOON in late November 2019, I left Canberra in a haze of bushfire smoke to drive back to my home on the South Coast of New South Wales (NSW). As I headed east, past dried-out farm country and stands of brittle eucalypts, a fierce wind whipped up a thick fog of dust and smoke. The smoke could have been coming from anywhere—there were more than 60 fires burning across NSW that week.

About halfway between the national capital and the coast, I pulled over to do a phone interview for a story I was working on about the extraordinary bushfire season already unfolding. It had started unseasonably early, in Queensland in late winter, before moving into northern NSW in spring. By early November, more than 1.6 million hectares had been razed, six people were dead and nearly 500 homes were gone in NSW's north. Places thought to be impervious to fire, such as rainforest and coastal swamps, were burning. At one point, the fire front was 6,000 kilometres long.

The author, Bronwyn Adcock, and her husband Chris.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

All this before the first day of summer. Fire chiefs and scientists warned the worst was still to come. I was starting to frame my story around something I'd read by Professor David Bowman, an experienced fire ecologist from the University of Tasmania. He'd predicted this fire season would "reframe our understanding of bushfire in Australia", and it would be "teaching us what can be true under a climate-changed world". *What would this new world look like,* I wondered, *and how prepared were we?*

Before I made my phone call, I checked the Fires Near Me app on my phone. This is the NSW Rural Fire Service's platform for distributing bushfire information. Anyone living on a bush property, near state forests or national parks, relies on it.

On my phone, I could see a new fire had appeared on the map. It wasn't near my home, but it was near the highway. I cancelled the interview and

The Currowan fire cast ominous clouds of smoke and dust over much of the New South Wales South Coast.

PHOTO: ©BENJAMIN RIDGWAY/GETTY IMAGES

left quickly in case the road was closed.

The fire was in dense bushland, a couple of kilometres from Nelligen, a village about half an hour inland from the tourist town of Batemans Bay, on the coast. Arriving in Nelligen, I could see clouds of smoke pulsing hundreds of metres into the sky. Small spot fires were breaking out closer to town. Car doors were slamming, and people were screeching in and out of driveways as they raced to be wherever they needed to be. Some stood transfixed, talking loudly into phones, eyes locked on the fire. I was struck by a sense of collective fear.

Exactly a week later this fire would be bearing down upon my own property with a ferocity I could never have imagined, and I would be waiting in another town to see if my husband and home had survived.

Over the course of the summer the Currowan fire—named after the state forest where it was ignited by lightning—would continue to threaten my extended family, friends and community. It would take lives and more than 300 homes. It would give us a day when there was no safe place left to be.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

FOR MANY AUSTRALIANS, the first real sign that something we weren't equipped to handle had arrived came during the first week in November. Nearly 100 fires were burning out of control across NSW, and 17 of them were considered life-threatening emergencies.

The state's fire chief predicted that the days ahead would be "the most dangerous bushfire week this nation has ever seen", and on 11 November, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian declared a seven-day state of emergency, closing nearly 600 schools.

A catastrophic fire warning was issued for the state's most populated areas, from Newcastle down to Sydney, Wollongong and the South Coast. In a statement, the Rural Fire Service (RFS) warned people that the scale of the danger meant not everyone would get help: "There are simply not enough fire trucks for every house. If you call for help, you may not get it."

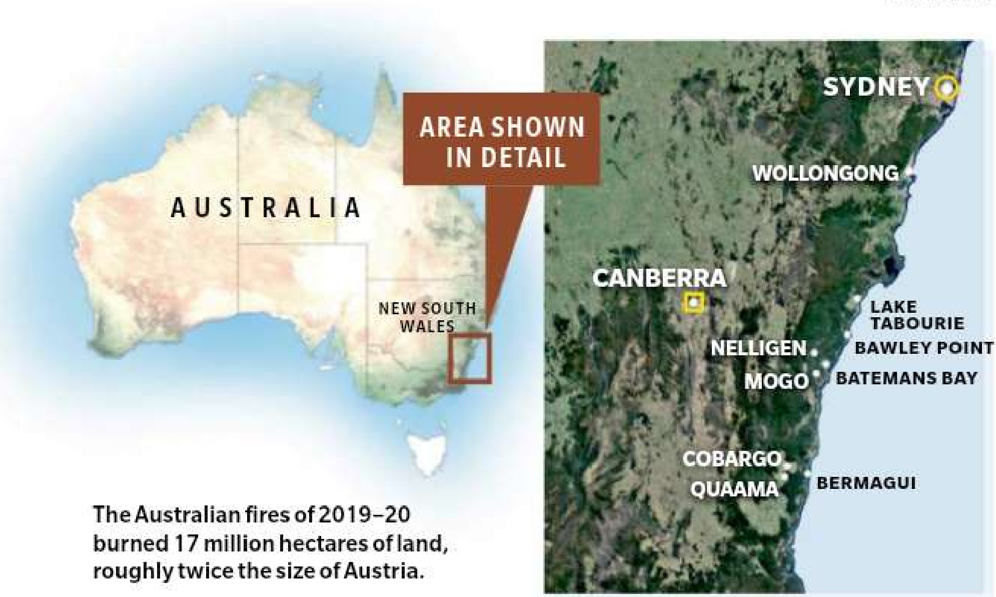
WE KNEW THE FIRE WAS COMING, BUT WE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE OR WHEN.

All firefighting agencies were stretched, not just the RFS. There were not enough NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service firefighters or experienced fire managers. And, despite Australia being two and a half months into its worst-ever fire season, only half of the large, high-volume water bombers that Australia leases from the northern hemisphere had arrived.

For its first five days, the Currowan fire burned in the sparsely populated forests that lie just inland from a string of small South Coast villages, such as Bawley Point. My property is on the side of a mountain that marks one of the edges where this vast backcountry ends and the coastal terrain begins. There was no immediate threat, but some days I could see smoke rising behind the mountain, and I started to find the occasional burnt leaf on the lawn.

We are always, more or less, ready for fire. When we built a decade ago, we used non-combustible materials and installed huge water tanks. Fire hoses are permanently fitted on the house and we maintain a large cleared area around the house. But that week I pulled out the bags of fireproof clothing and bought extra sprinklers. Local RFS crews and firefighters who worked for national parks and state forests traipsed through the bush around the clock, strengthening containment lines or locating the edges of the fire. Volunteers with day jobs or family responsibilities took the night shift.

By the end of its first five days, a Saturday night, the Currowan fire was nearly 8,000 hectares in size and only 30 per cent contained. Our best hope was waiting for rain that everyone knew wasn't coming. Another disquieting thing happened that week: the Fires Near Me app stopped working. On the ground it felt as if we were flying blind.



The Australian fires of 2019–20 burned 17 million hectares of land, roughly twice the size of Austria.

MAP BY MAGGIE LAROUX. SOURCE: GOOGLE MAPS

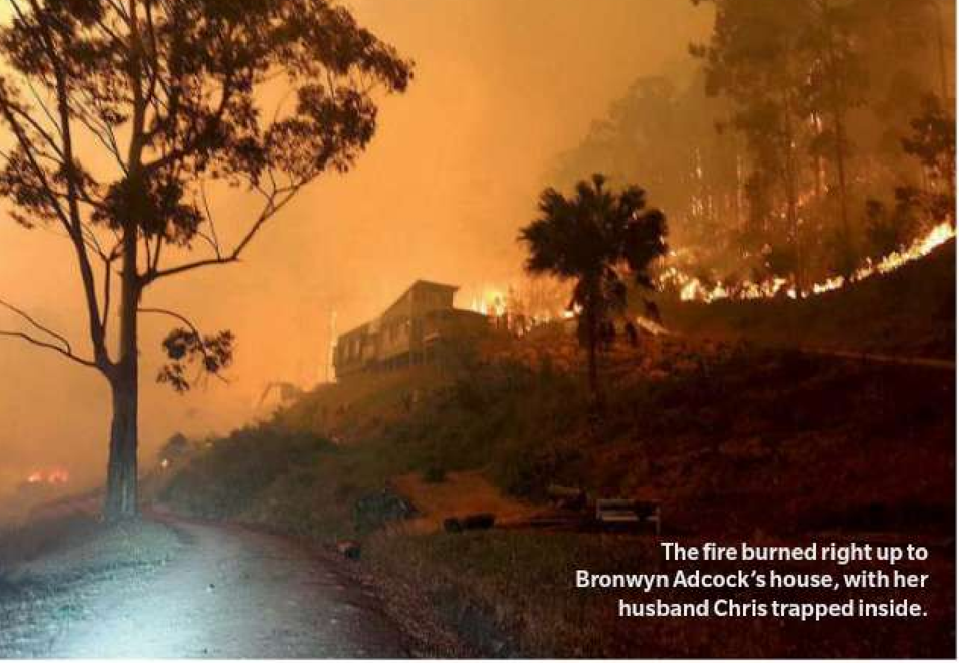
THE FIRE COMES FOR US

SIX DAYS AFTER IT IGNITED, the Currowan fire left the back country and started roaring towards the small towns and villages along the coast, as well as hundreds of more isolated properties, including my own. Thick orange smoke churned in the sky. I received a text message from emergency services telling people in our area to seek shelter.

I bundled photo albums and children into the car and drove them to my parents' house, in a semi-rural farming area about 40 kilometres further north, well away from the fire, then returned home to work with my husband, Chris, on final preparations.

A WhatsApp group had sprung up, with people in our area sharing information about the path of the fire. We knew it was coming, but we didn't know exactly where, or when. Our Achilles heel was a place on the mountain we called the 'saddle'; if it came through the saddle, the terrain would serve as a funnel, and any fire would be catastrophic.

The first night, I was home alone. Chris is an RFS volunteer and was out with a truck. Every few hours I would go outside to look and smell. At 3 a.m. I jolted awake to the lights of a long truck moving through the forest below us. It was a beekeeper, coming to remove his hives. I remembered a story I'd read about the North Coast fires, of beekeepers coming to check their destroyed hives after a fire went through and being traumatized by hearing animals screaming in pain, and I was



The fire burned right up to Bronwyn Adcock's house, with her husband Chris trapped inside.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

struck with a terrible clarity about the situation we were in.

The next afternoon I left, joining my children at my parents' house. Chris stayed to defend our home. Police roadblocks shut off 50 kilometres of highway; you were either in the fire zone or you were out. We'd discovered a way to listen to the RFS emergency radio scanner—real-time information about the path of the fire—and I had it on constantly.

Tuesday afternoon, exactly a week after Currowan ignited, in a last, strange stab at normality, I found myself sitting in the car at my son's cricket training, listening to the scanner, madly scribbling down notes. The WhatsApp group was pinging. On a map, I was plotting the emergency calls and reports of fire, and at 6 p.m. I knew with certainty it was coming over the saddle. I called Chris, but he already knew—because the fire was upon him and he was fighting it.

While the fire front was coming from the west, the first flames arrived from the east. The wind had carried burning embers kilometres ahead, igniting the forest below us and sending a canopy fire burning up the hill towards our house. It wrapped around the house and was then joined by the front, coming down the hill from the west.

With the canopies flaming, the fire ignited in the short grass, racing up under the house and licking at its edges. The carport and shed started exploding. Within minutes, the three possible escape routes through the forest to the highway were on fire.

When Chris called about 20 minutes later, I could hardly hear him for the roar and the heave in his voice, but I heard him say he needed help. I yelled ‘get into the house’ and the phone cut out.

I called the mobile number of David Sharpe, Chris’s deputy captain in our local RFS. “We’ll get him,” Sharpe said.

I waited for nearly an hour—a time of terrible, grey limbo when I shut myself in a room at my parents’ house, the children playing outside—until the call came to say Chris was alive.

THE CHARRED LANDSCAPE AROUND OUR PROPERTY WAS DEATHLY QUIET.

It was too dangerous to stay and protect our house. When I heard, the next day, that our house was still there, enormous relief was again tempered; three of our neighbours had lost theirs.

WE’D HAD OUR TURN, but the Currowan fire was still launching at several small coastal communities, and dozens of properties around us. Every day, someone I knew was in danger.

Aerial resources had turned up: water bombers hummed in the sky. Still, there were not enough resources to go around for everyone.

The highway remained closed for eight days. With people in the fire zone running low on food, ice and medicine, I gathered things they needed and met Chris at the roadblock. I exchanged the supplies for a forgotten homework book and two guinea pigs.

By that weekend, on Sunday, 8 December, more than half of the 100 fires across NSW were out of control, and we were just one of many communities being upended.

The Gospers Mountain fire, which started in Wollemi National Park in October with a lightning strike, was now consuming a vast area northwest of Sydney, including the Blue Mountains, and was being described as a “mega fire”. On social media, the Bureau of Meteorology said: “The massive NSW fires are in some cases just too big to put out at the moment.”

In the second week of December the air quality index in Sydney reached 11 times higher than ‘hazardous’, with buildings being evacuated as smoke triggered fire alarms.

By late December, the Gospers Mountain fire was so voracious it was filmed travelling up the sheer 200-metre cliffs of the Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains. By then it had burned

Much of the town of Cobargo was devastated by bushfires on 31 December 2019.

PHOTO: ©SEAN DAVEY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

through 4,68,000 hectares, earning the dubious distinction of being the biggest forest fire from a single ignition point in Australian history.

HORROR AT THE COAST

INTO LATE DECEMBER, the Currowan fire continued to grow in all directions. It merged with another fire on its northern flank. Some days it flared, emergency warnings were issued, alerts sent for ember attacks, then it would subside. Only to have the process repeat days later.

The charred landscape around our property was deathly quiet. I laid out water and feeding stations for the echidnas, wombats and wallabies I once saw every day, and they were left largely untouched. The once forested landscape was stripped so bare I could see contours in the land I never knew were there.

While our home survived, it was uninhabitable because the fire had consumed all our water tanks, the underground septic system and solar power. I'd found a temporary place to live in Bawley Point. It was near our home, and because the fire had already burned right up to the village's edges, it seemed unlikely to burn again.

I learnt more about the night of the fire at our place. The forest into our property was already well aflame when the Bawley Point RFS crew arrived to rescue Chris. The captain, Charlie Magnuson, directed the crew of one other man and three women to activate sprinklers outside the truck and prepare fire blankets before driving in, past flames on both sides of the road, higher than their vehicle. They risked their own lives. I dwelled on this, not always comfortably, understanding what an enormous thing it was that I had asked of these people.

On the morning of 31 December—New Year's Eve—I woke at 3 a.m. Ever alert, the first thing I did was check the now-working Fires Near Me app. I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

The day before, a new fire had started in remote bush at a place called Badja State Forest, around 200 kilometres south-west of Bawley Point, on the far South Coast. Now, the app was showing it was barrelling towards towns, including Cobargo, a semi-rural community near my brother's farm. I texted him; he was already in the car with his family, racing to the coast.

WE WERE WARNED AN EVEN MORE DANGEROUS FIRE DAY WAS COMING.

The Badja Forest Road fire moved so swiftly and ferociously in the hours before dawn that many people only rose from their beds as the fire was upon them.

I turned on the RFS scanner and it was horror and utter chaos. An RFS crew reported that they were pulling children out of a burning home. ("They have no shoes on—can someone get me an ambulance?") Houses were burning in the village of Quaama. A truck tried to save them, then suddenly it was: "Red, Red, Red—we are retreating to the fire shed, we are on life protection only." A plea to stop Cobargo residents fleeing straight into the path of the fire. News that shops in the historic town were on fire. And a desperate voice: "There's no bloody trucks, so we're buggered."

By morning, around 5,000 people were sheltering in the little coastal town of Bermagui, including my brother and his family. Sitting in the kitchen at Bawley Point, around breakfast time, I heard a report: "Mate, I think we could be one hour from impact on Bermagui and we have no trucks there." I thought I was going to vomit. I googled the safest way to shelter from fire in a car, texted instructions to my brother, then walked outside to breathe.

I learnt the Currowan fire was also on the move that morning when I saw a neighbour, who'd just returned home after being evacuated from her workplace in the town of Batemans Bay, around 40 kilometres south of Bawley Point. She had a small burn on her arm from an ember. I was so shocked I made her repeat the story several times: an ember attack in town?

The Currowan fire was in fact going though parts of Batemans Bay, the village of Mogo, and into two beachside hamlets packed with holidaymakers. Thousands of people were chased on to beaches, watching as houses went up in flames. Hundreds of properties were burnt.

Phone and internet communications were patchy, but as the day progressed, I started to hear that something terrible was also happening to our north. The Currowan fire had raced into the small lakeside hamlet of Conjola Park—around 40 kilometres from Bawley Point—just before lunch. Some residents say the first they knew of it was when their yard was on fire.

Locals trying to defend their homes say the town water supply stopped working. Fire and Rescue NSW trucks arrived, but without town water they were limited in what they could do. The only road out was blocked by fire, barely passable for even emergency services, so residents and thousands of tourists staying in a caravan park were stuck, some fleeing into the lake—where they then saw in the new year. By the morning, 89 homes were gone and three people in the immediate area of Conjola were dead.

In all, the fires around New Year's Eve took eight lives on the NSW South Coast. In the Eurobodalla Shire alone, which covers the towns of Batemans Bay and Mogo, more than 450 homes were destroyed—the vast majority by the Currowan fire.

The Currowan fire struck the Kangaroo Valley, south-west of Sydney, in early January. Three men managed to escape after their National Parks truck hit a fallen tree.

PHOTO: ©WOLTER PEETERS/THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD/FAIRFAX MEDIA VIA GETTY IMAGES

"YOU HAVE TO CRY"

ON THE FIRST day of 2020, residents of the South Coast and thousands of tourists woke to no power and virtually no internet or phone communications. Still reeling from the fire front that had just passed through—and which was still burning—we were warned an even more dangerous fire day was coming

The fires cast an eerie glow over holiday-makers who were forced to huddle on the beaches around Batemans Bay.

PHOTO: ALASTAIR PRIOR VIA TWITTER

in four days. Premier Berejiklian again announced a state of emergency, the third for the season, and declared a 'tourist leave zone' covering a 14,000-square-kilometre area between Nowra—around 90 kilometres north of Bawley Point—and south to the edge of the Victorian border.

The highway to our south was completely impassable. The only escape route out was north, and for two days this route was rarely safe or open. At times, the gridlock of traffic waiting to escape stretched out for nearly 10 kilometres; small convoys would get through, only to have the road blocked again by fire. Holiday-makers desperate to leave slept in their cars on the roadside.

Petrol stations ran out of fuel, and the few that still had it served queues stretching out of sight. Hordes gathered outside the local grocery store, where only a small number of people were let in at a time.

As shelves emptied, the mayor of the local Shoalhaven council issued a plea: just take what you need. Water supplies and waste systems were damaged, and warnings were issued to some coastal communities to boil drinking water and avoid swimming in the ocean. In a surreal start to 2020, I was rationing fuel and pooling food with friends.

On the second day of the year, I came home to find Bawley's RFS captain, Charlie Magnuson, in tears at our kitchen table. It had been a long and gruelling fire season, but these few days had been especially tough. The morning Conjola Park went up in flames, the Bawley RFS had no fire trucks—one was broken down, the other seconded elsewhere.

Eventually they'd borrowed one, with part of the crew being dispatched to Conjola Park—to find a community destroyed, residents wandering the streets in shock, thousands of distressed tourists trapped on the edge of the lake—while the rest raced to a hamlet further north to rescue two people who were suffering horrific burns.

Billions of animals died in the Australian fires, while many others, including this injured koala at the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, were rescued.

The crew gave first aid and comfort to them while they waited for a helicopter. "You have to cry," Magnuson said. "There'd be something wrong if you didn't."

A FINAL BRUSH WITH FIRE

MY FAMILY HAD one final brush with the Currowan fire. On January, the tourist convoys had finally escaped the region and the South Coast was as quiet as winter.

For a brief moment that morning, as I had my first swim in the ocean for the season, I dared to hope that maybe the forecasts of a terrible fire day had been wrong. But then I walked up the Bawley Point headland and saw new black smoke billowing out to my north, near the little village of Lake Tabourie.

Some people had evacuated from Tabourie earlier in the day as a precaution, but now cars were pouring into Bawley with those making a last-minute escape. I called two people I knew who had remained but were not planning to defend. You need to move now, I said.

I received a phone call from a neighbour telling me that smoke was coming from behind the mountain at our already burnt property. I pulled on fireproof clothing and, with a friend, raced home. The wind was roaring and newly burnt leaves were coming in the air from behind the mountain. With broken tanks and burnt-out pipes, I could barely cobble together a water supply. I quickly lost my nerve for being there.

PHOTO: © SAEED KHAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

On my way back to Bawley Point, an RFS bushfire alert pinged on my phone—it was a 'seek shelter as the fire approaches' warning for an area that covered from Bawley to as far north as Nowra.

Back in the Bawley house—which was now sheltering 12 adults and children and a few too many dogs—we debated whether to go to the headland straight away or to wait. The power went out.

A strong southerly wind came through. Not long after, I got a phone call from someone I knew to be generally unflappable, but his voice was racing as he started telling me about how he'd just been helping a friend defend a property further north when the southerly had whipped up a firestorm that he had barely escaped in his car.

Just as I was wondering why he was telling me this, he got to his point: "Where are your mum and dad?"

My parents' house—the place where we had first sheltered when the fire hit our property a month earlier—was now apparently in the path of this latest reach of the fire.

I called them immediately. Dad answered just as they were pulling into the local showground to take shelter with around 100 people and countless animals. They'd been at home, with no sign of fire, when everything went black and they heard a pinging on the roof. It was raining embers, and within seconds the yard was on fire. All they had time to do was get in the car and drive away, leaving the lights and TV on.

We discovered the next day their house had been saved by a group of local men who turned up in their utes. They saved numerous houses that day—places the RFS couldn't get to. This is the flipside of the story of this bushfire season: Australians doing everything they could.

THE 2019–20 AUSTRALIAN bushfire season burned more than 17 million hectares of land—equivalent to 70 per cent of the land area of New Zealand. Thirty-three people, including nine fire fighters, died and more than 3,000 homes were destroyed. More than three billion animals were estimated killed, with the possibility that some endangered species are now extinct. In NSW, a third of the national park estate and more than 80 per cent of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area were burnt. The estimated cost to the economy was in the tens of billions of dollars.

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Adios & auf Wiedersehen

When you speak two languages and start losing vocabulary in both: byelingual.

—@BLAINELSIMPSON

CULTURESCAPE

BOOKS, ARTS AND *Entertainment*

RETELLING THE GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD

In Eden, *mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik, reinterprets Jewish, Christian and Islamic lore through an Indian lens. He tells us how he strikes a balance between the intimate and the panoramic in his writing*

BY *Shreevatsa Nevatia*

You dedicate your new book to your teachers at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour High School, Chembur. We know you acted in plays, but what was high school really like for you?

I was a nerd, a front-bencher, a first-ranker, exempted from physical training. I was highly academic, but I would participate in extracurricular activities like elocution and plays. Theatre—plays, skits—all played a very important role in our school. They give it a lot of importance. I didn't realize the value of it then but now I see how these experiences helped me become a good public speaker.

Not everyone chooses to become a mythologist. What really spurred you to take this on?

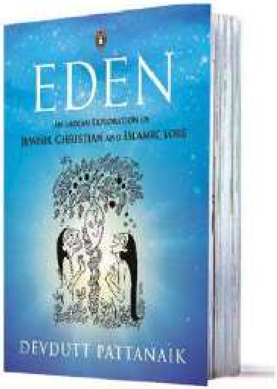
It was all very organic. I remember I used to read *Amar Chitra Katha*, but one day, I discovered a book from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, which told me tales from the Bhagavatam. It made realize that there's more to the scriptures than the stories I was being told by those *Amar Chitra Katha* comics. Soon after, whenever I would go to a bookshop, I would typically gravitate towards the section where you had books on philosophy and mythology. Over time, this became my area of interest.

PHOTO: MANDAR DEODHAR

I also realized most people didn't know these stories, and so I would tell them what I had discovered. That often made me the life of the party. At the time, though, it never occurred to me that any of this would become a profession. It was only around 1996, when I was writing freelance columns for friends, that one of them said they knew a publisher who wants someone to write a book on Shiva. I wanted to try and see what I could do, and finally, that book became *Shiva: An Introduction* (1997).

***Eden* is about Abrahamic lore. The stories you tell here are different from those of Hindu myths that you otherwise do. Was the intimacy this time somehow diminished?**

I've been familiar with these stories, but when you start actually writing them, you realize these stories are not told intimately. They are told from a distance. The intimacy you get in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, or in a Krishna story is different. To be intimate, Ram has to be a person you talk about, and through the person, you move towards something grand. Here, you start with this idea of the all-powerful, mighty God. And you can't really do a 360-degree analysis of God, right? It doesn't allow you that. You accept it as correct, as right. That's the whole point of a paradigm, how they function. You enter a different one and try telling the story very differently. Also, while writing, I saw that, because it's an Indian exploration, I must be true to who I am when telling these stories.



"IT'S ONLY NOW THAT HISTORIANS ARE WAKING UP TO THE IDEA THAT HUMANS PREFER BARDS."

In *Eden*, as in your other works, your telling of myths has been intimate and dispassionate. Has this been a hard balance to strike?

It's the way I am. When I'm telling the story, I make it personal. Then I step away to show you the grand history and geography of these stories. A story has to touch you emotionally, otherwise it's not a good story. So, I move between focus and perspective. I find that's very easy for me. Over the years, you gather so much information that you realize you have to locate them in this complex crucible of space and time. It's not complex, it's fun. I enjoy it.

You write that "the doctrine of rebirth enables [the] co-existence of multiple truths". There's comfort here, but isn't there also room for disagreement?

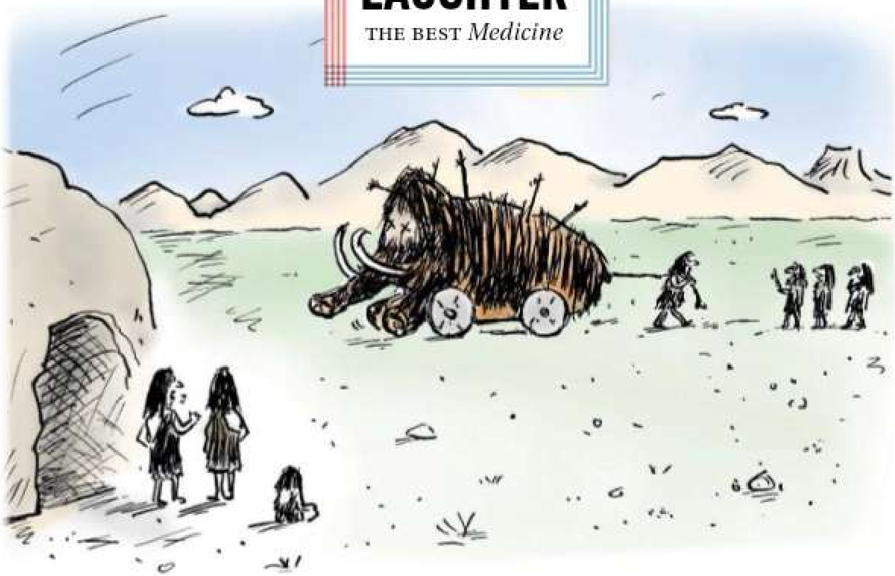
Life is only about disagreement. Why should everybody agree on things?

To assume that you and I will both agree on things is to assume that we're both clones with the same database packed in our heads. That's just not true. And that's what Hinduism and Indian thought deals with—the multiplicity of ideas. Tribal communities stick to a single idea. That's the nature of a tribe. They try to consolidate a knowledge system that doesn't shift very much over time. They lock themselves in and say, 'This shall be the truth of our community.' But how does one tribe then work with a neighbouring tribe? They will have to figure out a way of working with each other, while maintaining their own integrity. In other parts of the world, we often see tribes become hostile to each other, but in India, multiple ideas have coexisted in tension, in hierarchy. Some, unfortunately, became very powerful over time and some became very powerless, but each group maintained its own integrity.

Reading *Eden* and also your tweets, one gets the sense that Hindu mythology has been presented as Hindu history for a long, long time now; that this isn't necessarily a new project ...
Until the 19th century, there was no difference between history and mythology anywhere in the world. If you and I were born in the 1800s, we would genuinely believe King Arthur was a historical figure. Only in the late 19th and 20th century, do terms like 'constructed genealogies' and 'constructed histories' start to get heard. It's also only now that historians are waking up to this realization that humans prefer bards. A bard will come and say your ancestors were lovely people. A historian will come and say, 'Well, actually, the evidence doesn't say so.' We'll just ask the historian to leave our house. That's why historians are feeling cornered. They had thought that if they tell us evidence-based truths, they will get a privileged position because they'd be the new priests. But that's not how societies function. Societies love bards.

Do stories—myths in particular—have to have morals in the end? Can't we just delight in their narrative?
There are different kinds of stories. A parable, for instance, is designed to have a moral ending. It is prescriptive. A mythology, on the other hand, is designed to help you understand the origin of things. So, they have different purposes. Now, parents have assumed that stories are designed to brainwash their children. If I'm going to tell a young girl that good girls obey their husbands, isn't that indoctrination? Disney goes around, repeatedly telling us there is something called 'true love.' Though there's no psychological and scientific evidence of such a phenomenon called 'true love,' they keep selling it in their stories. We must understand who is the storyteller. The storyteller here isn't interested in your children becoming wise. The storyteller is interested in whether or not you will pay money to buy merchandise. R

LAUGHTER
THE BEST *Medicine*



"Once he invented the wheel, it was only a matter of time before he came up with the food truck."

DAVID SIPRESS/CARTOONSTOCK.COM

"How come you're late?" the boss asks his assistant as she walks in the door.

"It was awful," she says. "I was walking down the street and saw a terrible accident. A man was lying in the middle of the street badly injured. There was blood everywhere. I'm just glad I took that first aid course." "What did you do?" "I sat down and put my head between my knees to keep from fainting."

—jobhuntexpress.com

Grandpa always said, "When one door closes, another one opens." Great man, horrible cabinetmaker.

—BUD FRAMPTON

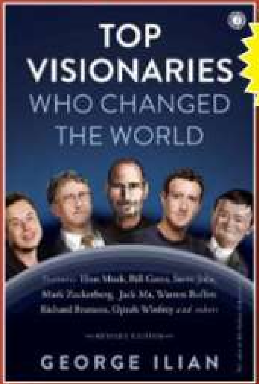
I was going to quit all my bad habits for the new year, but then I remembered that nobody likes a quitter.

—GCFL.net

Hear about the new restaurant called Karma? There's no menu: You get what you deserve

—NICOLE FORNABAIO/ *RD.COM*

AN INSPIRATIONAL TITLE FOR INSTANT SUCCESS



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HORROR MOVIE REBOOTS FOR MIDDLE AGE

- Dawn of the Dead Car Battery
- Stepchildren of the Corn
- Rosemary's Baby Shower
- The Last Co-Op on the Left
- Night Sweats of the Living Dead
- Mortgage Payment of the Damned
- Final Destination Wedding
- Small Talk About Remodeling the Cabinet of Dr Caligari
- Bridal Shower of Frankenstein
- The Sixth Sensible Meal
- The Bababook Club
- The Blair Witch School Project

—*By* MAURA QUINT AND JESSIE DEAN ALTMAN *from McSweeney's*

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A new year is upon us. And so is the seasonal urge to be better, and do better. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started on a 'new year, new you,' or not!

✦ With 2022 on the horizon, start thinking about how you're gonna be BETTER next year. Stay on the couch LONGER. Ghost that guy HARDER. Cancel your plans with a more BELIEVABLE excuse.

—🐦@THOUGHSCULPTOR

✦ I don't believe in New Year's resolutions, because you can start a healthy habit and give up three days later ANY time of the year .

—🐦@ARISCOTT

✦ There's no law that your resolution needs to be positive; you can resolve to become a lot worse.

—🐦@ROASTMALONE_

✦ Hopes for 2021: see the world, meet someone new, thriving in my career. Hopes for 2021: return to normalcy, hugging my friends. Hopes for 2022: ... idk man can we just get the next season of *Selling Sunset* soon ?

—🐦@BRETTSVERGARA

Q: What is a New Year's resolution?
A: Something that goes in one year and out the other.

—FROM *RD.COM*

Realization: The asteroid that ended the dinosaurs was technically the highest ratio of killing birds to one stone in Earth's history.

—🐦@CUBOSH

RD RECOMMENDS

Films

Jeremy Irons as Neville Chamberlain in *Munich—The Edge of War*

ENGLISH: If you're a film buff, you might be tired of WWII dramas. There's only that much there is to say about that chapter of history, and, also, we know how it all must end. But releasing on Netflix on 21 January, there is a good chance that ***MUNICH—THE EDGE OF WAR*** will cure your fatigue. Based on a Robert Harris novel, it's set in 1938 and stars Jeremy Irons as British PM Neville Chamberlain. A perfect prelude!

HINDI: Shakun Batra's earlier films—*Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu* and *Kapoor & Sons*—are ample proof that he knows a thing or two about human relationships. With **GEHRAIYAAN,** his latest offering that is all set to stream on Amazon Prime Video from 25 January, Batra takes a hard look at monogamy, exploring how difficult love can often be. The films stars Deepika Padukone and Siddhant Chaturvedi.

TELUGU: *Baahubali* director S. S. Rajamouli is again returning with his larger-than-life brand of cinema, but this time, he is giving heroism a patriotic spin. Set in the 1920s, ***RRR*** tells the story of two Indian revolutionaries—Alluri Sitarama Raju (Ram Charan) and Komaram Bheem (N. T. Rama Rao Jr)—and is expected to release in theatres on 7 January. Alia Bhatt and Ajav Devgn will play crucial cameos.

MALAYALAM: Actor Dulquer Salmaan plays a cop for the first time in

Deepika Padukone and Siddhant Chaturvedi in *Gehraiyaan*

SALUTE, but like with so much of modern Malayalam cinema, his relationships with people and power are not all too simple. Clearly disgraced, he takes a stab at redemption through strange, underhanded means in this gritty procedural thriller. If COVID does not play spoilsport, the film will release in theatres on 14 January.

Dulquer Salmaan in *Salute*

#WATCHLIST: ON OUR RADAR

***After Life* Season 3:** Ricky Gervais usually never shies away from irreverence and candour, but *After Life*, one could argue, has seen him at his most gentle. Playing Tony, a local journalist consumed by grief after the loss of his wife Lisa, the comic navigates the themes of death and depression with an honesty and warmth that is refreshing and moving. The final season releases on Netflix on 14 January.

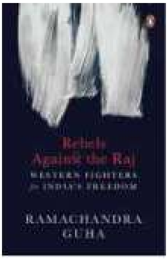
Ricky Gervais in *After Life*

***Human* Season 1:** Coming to Disney+ Hotstar on 14 January, this edge-of-your-seat thriller explores the darker sides of human medical trials. Asking questions about ethics, the value of human life and class divides, the series will attempt to show the lengths people will go to when trying to escape emotions like grief, guilt and shame. Shefali Shah will play the lead in this Vipul Amrutlal Shah offering.

Poster for *Human* Season 1

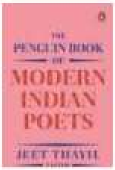
Books

Rebels Against the Raj: Western Fighters for India's Freedom by Ramachandra Guha, Allen Lane



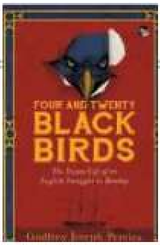
Loyalty, unlike patriotism or nationalism, doesn't need to be inherited. It can also be discovered. For the likes of Annie Besant, Samuel Stokes and Philip Spratt—all foreigners who had fought for Indian independence—it seems clear that values mattered more than chauvinism. In a world that wasn't yet globalized, it was foreigners like them who showed that humanity could sometimes trump difference.

In *Rebels Against the Raj*, historian Ramachandra Guha tells the story of seven people who sacrificed the comforts of home to fight for a cause they simply thought was just. Some of them, in the end, were jailed or deported, but their legacies, Guha shows us, have survived the onslaught of forgetting.



YOU MAY ALSO LIKE ...

***The Penguin Books of Modern Indian Poets*, edited by Jeet Thayil (Penguin):** As far as anthologies of poetry go, this one seems to be both urgent and delightful. Starting from Nissim Ezekiel's first volume of poems that was published in London in 1952, this collection includes some of India's greats— Dom Moraes, Arun Kolatkar and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra—but it also gives pride of place to others who were neglected and forgotten. Most crucially, 49 of the poets here are women; only 45 are men.



Scope Out

***Four and Twenty Blackbirds: The Insane Life of an English Smuggler in Bombay* (Speaking Tiger):** Set during Partition, this novel tells the story of a troubled Englishman who smuggles his way to Bombay.

***The Eastern Gate: War and Peace in Nagaland, Manipur and India's Far East* (Simon & Schuster):** Sudeep Chakravarti sends dispatches from the northeast, a land unique in both its beauty and horror.

***The Dream Narrative: The Dreams of God and Mortals in Classical Hinduism* (Speaking Tiger):** In this book, Wendy Doniger asks if we are all only living in a dream being dreamt somewhere by the author of the universe.

Music

TUNE IN

Song: 'Love of You'
Artist: Aakash Mehta
Album: *What a Life*

If you felt Aakash Mehta is only a stand-up comedian, the joke really is on you. A law graduate, Mehta was once an entrepreneur. More interestingly, he also has a diploma in audio engineering. Mehta's many talents, one could argue, have finally coalesced in his debut music album, *What a Life*. While there is, of course, something quirky about Mehta's songs, they're also disarming, meant to put you at ease.

On 'Love of You', for instance, we hear in Mehta's lyrics the remorse of a misanthrope: "I regret the things that I have said to people I love—friends, even family and passers-by and other drivers, driving on the street." Mehta, though, isn't being clever. His earnestness is accentuated by his drawl and the sounds of a ukulele. He genuinely seems to want to find a place beyond "jealousy and greed", and when he does sing about its discovery, you can't help but inwardly smile. This is a ditty for every day.

Comedian, writer and musician Aakash Mehta

LISTEN

AUDIOBOOK: Narrated brilliantly by Colin Firth, listening to Graham Greene's ***THE END OF THE AFFAIR*** proves to be even more riveting than reading it. The classic novel has it all—the Blitz, adultery, politics.

COLIN FIRTH
The End of the Affair
GRAHAM GREENE

PODCAST: A perfect antidote to boredom and blues, Keegan-Michael Key's podcast ***THE HISTORY OF SKETCH COMEDY*** starts with the Greeks, stops at Monty Python and ends with *Saturday Night Live*.

audible ORIGINAL
THE HISTORY of SKETCH COMEDY
KEEGAN-MICHAEL KEY

—COMPILED BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

REVIEW

Murder in the Jungle

The wonderfully performed *Aranyak* keeps you on the edge of your seat

BY *Jai Arjun Singh*

Raveena Tandon as Kasturi in *Aranyak*

If, like this writer, you were an adolescent when the fresh-faced Raveena Tandon burst on our screens in 1991, it's pleasing to see her in a very different avatar—as small-town cop Kasturi, juggling work and home pressures—in the new Netflix series *Aranyak*. It is also, from the point of view of increasing opportunities for middle-aged actresses, encouraging. But Tandon's presence is just one of the many arresting elements here.

When a young tourist in the town of Sironah is murdered, Kasturi, who is on leave to be with family, teams up with her replacement Angad (an excellent Parambrata Chatterjee). Their methods clash at first, there is wariness and cultural disconnect, but mutual respect develops as the investigation progresses, and as Kasturi learns that the outwardly poised Angad is battling his own demons.

There is a clear-cut allegorical function to Sironah and the jungle it is surrounded by; but this coexists with an attention to detail, and the construction of characters from the inside out. Kasturi's father-in-law, also a former cop (played by Ashutosh Rana), is obsessed with his failure to catch a mythical "*nar-tendva*" (leopard-man) that had run amok 19 years ago, and who may now have reappeared. Angad is irritated by such superstitions, but they seem inescapable. Meanwhile other characters—from a local shop-owner to a high-profile minister and her criminal son—have intersecting histories, and too many of them seem to conceal secrets.

In a way this show is reminiscent of the acclaimed recent series *Mare of Easttown*, also a crime procedural set in a place where everyone knows everyone else. But *Aranyak*—suspenseful, well-paced and well performed—loses nothing in the comparison. R

STUDIO

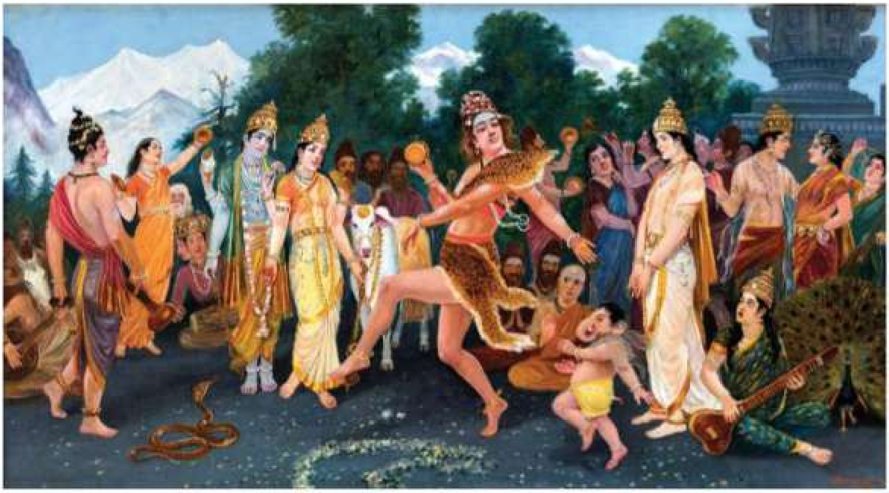


IMAGE COURTESY: DAG

Untitled (Shiva's Twilight Dance
by M. V. Dhuranda
Oil on canvas, 1934
35.5 X 64.2 inches

GIVEN OUR VENERATION for the gods, it becomes hard for us to think that they, too, might sometimes want to let their hair down and have some simple, light-hearted fun. Over time, we have grown to fear Shiva and his earth-shattering, world-destroying *tandava*. We don't usually stop to think about his *sandhya tandava*, for instance—the one he dances at twilight—a dance that creates and protects.

There's, of course, something playful about M. V. Dhurandar's depiction of Shiva's *tandava*: Vishnu looks resigned, Saraswati looks gobsmacked, while Ganesh seems to just want to join his father. It's almost as if someone has just turned on the speakers at a celestial picnic.

Interestingly, Maharawal Natwarsinhji Chauhan had commissioned this work in the 1930s after seeing the Vatican's frescoes. Having been the centrepiece in Natwarsinhji's Kusum Vilas Palace for several years, this painting will next be exhibited at Iconic Masterpieces of Indian Modern Art, DAG's inaugural exhibition in Mumbai. R

—BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

ME & MY SHELF

Writer, editor and journalist **Nisha Susan** is the co-founder of two media companies, The Ladies Finger and Grist Media. She is the author of *The Women Who Forgot to Invent Facebook and Other Stories*, and has recently translated K. R. Meera's acclaimed novella *Qabar* from Malayalam to English.

PHOTO: PAROMITA VOHRA

Passionate Minds: Women Rewriting the World

BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT, *Knopf*, *₹2,071* I love essay collections and Pierpont writes about literary women as vastly different yet same-same as Mae West, Mary McCarthy, Margaret Mitchell, Zora Neale Hurston and Hannah Arendt.

The Sensational Life and Death of Qandeel Baloch

BY SANAM MAHER, *Aleph*, *₹599* A book about the Pakistani social media star who was murdered by her brother (and the world) should be just plain depressing. Instead, it is moving, elegant and passionate.

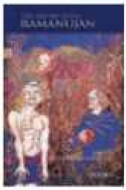
The Daughter of Time

BY JOSEPHINE TEY, *Random House UK*, *₹755* Some people think what we want from crime fiction is grit. What we really want from crime fiction is style. It could be in flourishes like trench coats or it could be in the uncompromising whip-me-baby relationship that Tana French establishes with her readers. Or it could be like Josephine Tey who only writes wonderful sentences and has a bored policeman stuck in a hospital bed solve a historical mystery using art. Talk about style.

The Absent Traveller: Prakrit Love Poetry from The Gathasaptasati of Satavahana Hala

BY ARVIND KRISHNA MEHROTRA (TRANSLATOR), *Penguin India*, *₹199* Back when *The Absent Traveller* was out of print, a friend gouged out a dozen copies from a warehouse and bestowed a copy to a deserving candidate. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's translation of these ancient Prakrit erotic poems is one of those books I feel gratitude for. Thank you for existing!

The Oxford India Ramanujan



BY A. K. RAMANUJAN, *OUP India, ₹11,995* I saved up in my 20s to buy the luxurious *The Oxford India Ramanujan* and it is still one of my favourite collections. It's got all the great translations of Sangam poetry and vachanas and also Ramanujan's own work which is sexy, witty and deeply satisfying.

Dime Store Magic

BY KELLEY ARMSTRONG, *Orbit, ₹599* I will read anything by Kelley Armstrong. Nearly all of her fantasy novels have caused me to abandon work and purpose for the day and fall right into whatever breathless adventure she has written. *Dime Store Magic* is one of my favourites.

Making Babies: Stumbling into Motherhood

BY ANNE ENRIGHT, *Vintage, ₹475* Prose like poetry. The tragic knowledge of motherhood. Heart filled with black comedy. A scene with crutches will remind you how ridiculously inadequate the current edition of human childbirth is. We need a system update.

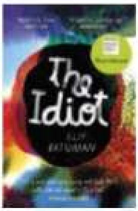
An Experiment in Love

BY HILARY MANTEL, Fourth Estate, ₹550 Let me say that when Margaret Atwood, bleak-eyed feminist of the North American continent, reviewed this slim 'campus novel,' she said, "'Enter the *Dragoness'* might be a more likely title, for this is a story about emotional kung-fu, female style—except that by the end, although all are wounded or worse, there's no clear winner." All true, but take it from me: I hate bleak fiction but this one will just make you bloodthirsty.

When the Time is Right

BY BUDDHADEVA BOSE, *Penguin India, ₹550* I am a huge fan of this Buddhadeva Bose book (translated into English by Arunava Sinha) which tells the story of Swati who comes of age in Kolkata just before Independence. When I tell people that there is an important scene set in a Chinese restaurant, everyone immediately gets the feel of it.

The Idiot



BY ELIF BATUMAN, *Vintage, ₹499* Another coming-of-age novel set, for most part, in Harvard in the 1990s. Batuman wrote this fat, magical novel in which nothing much happens, everything feels huge the way it did when you were 19, and somehow turns the tedium of all that into fiction that is never tedious. I was awed. Someone had written a novel that runs the risk of never being seen for how brilliant it was because she makes it look so easy.

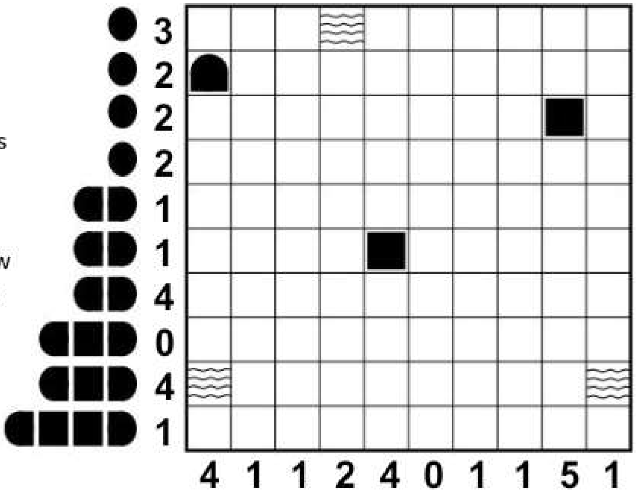
Book prices are subject to change.

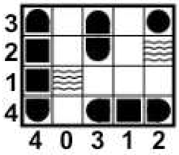
BRAIN GAMES

7 Pages TO SHARPEN *Your Mind*

Ships

How to play:
Determine the position of the ten ships listed. A square with wavy lines indicates water and will not contain a ship. The numbers indicate how many squares in that row or column contain parts of ships. No two ships touch each other, not even diagonally.



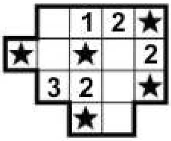


Example:

Star Search

How to play:
Find the stars that are hidden in some of the blank squares. The numbered squares indicate how many stars are hidden in squares adjacent to it (including diagonally).

Example:

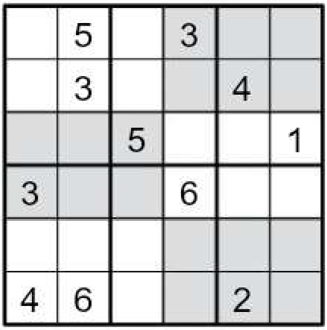


1		2		1	
1		2		2	
1			2	3	
2		3	3		
					2
	1	2		2	1

SIXY SUDOKU

1

●●○○○

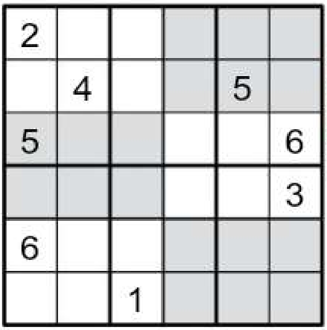


	5		3		
	3			4	
		5			1
3			6		
4	6			2	

How to play: Insert the numbers 1 to 6 just once in each a) row, b) column, c) bold outlined area and d) white or grey rectangle.

2

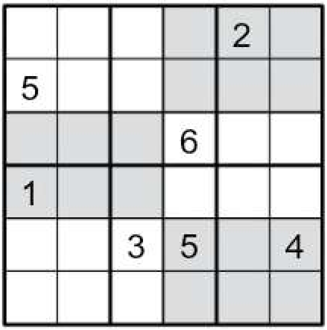
●●●○○



2					
	4			5	
5					6
					3
6					
		1			

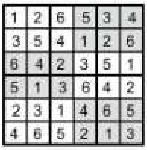
3

●●●○○



				2	
5					
			6		
1					
		3	5		4

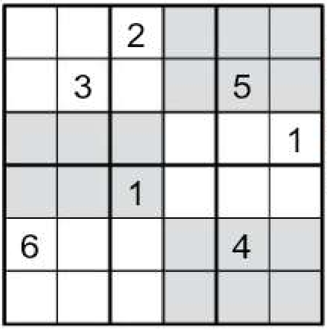
Example:



1	2	6	5	3	4
3	5	4	1	2	6
6	4	2	3	5	1
5	1	3	6	4	2
2	3	1	4	6	5
4	6	5	2	1	3

4

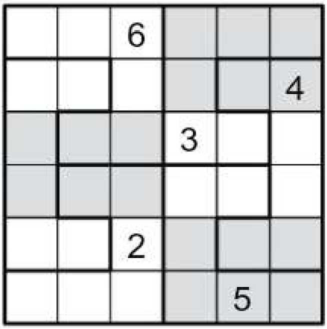
●●●●○



		2			
	3			5	
					1
		1			
6				4	

5

●●●●○

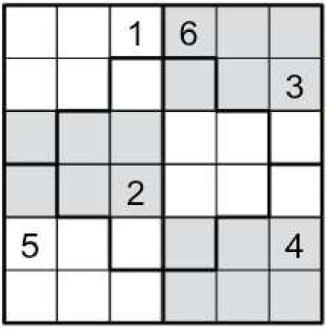


		6			
					4
			3		
		2			
				5	

Beware! The bold outlined areas are no longer 2x3!

6

●●●●●



		1	6		
					3
		2			
5					4

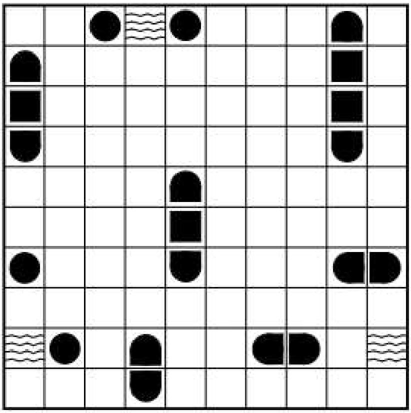
For answers, turn to page 144.
Visit *www.sixysudoku.com* for books and a free app

Puzzles © *PZZL.com*

BRAIN GAMES SOLUTIONS

From pages 142 and 143

Ships



Star Search

1	★	2		1	
1		2	★	2	
1			2	3	★
2	★	3	3	★	
	★		★	★	2
	1	2		2	1

SIXY SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

1

1	5	4	3	6	2
2	3	6	1	4	5
6	4	5	2	3	1
3	1	2	6	5	4
5	2	3	4	1	6
4	6	1	5	2	3

2

2	6	5	4	3	1
1	4	3	6	5	2
5	3	2	1	4	6
4	1	6	5	2	3
6	2	4	3	1	5
3	5	1	2	6	4

3

3	6	4	1	2	5
5	1	2	3	4	6
2	4	5	6	3	1
1	3	6	4	5	2
6	2	3	5	1	4
4	5	1	2	6	3

4

1	5	2	3	6	4
4	3	6	1	5	2
2	6	5	4	3	1
3	4	1	5	2	6
6	1	3	2	4	5
5	2	4	6	1	3

5

3	4	6	5	2	1
2	1	5	6	3	4
6	2	1	3	4	5
4	5	3	1	6	2
5	3	2	4	1	6
1	6	4	2	5	3

6

2	3	1	6	4	5
4	5	6	2	1	3
6	1	5	4	3	2
3	4	2	5	6	1
5	6	3	1	2	4
1	2	4	3	5	6

WORD POWER

Computer language is more than zeroes and ones. Test your tech savvy with these Internet-related words.

BY *Sarah Chassé*

1. meme
A: lip-synched video.
B: malicious commentator.
C: image or behaviour that spreads through imitation.

2. pharming
A: redirecting traffic to a fraudulent website.
B: harnessing the computer power of multiple users.
C: growing one's social media presence.

3. gigaflop
A: tech fail.
B: device with limited storage capacity.
C: speed of one billion floating-point operations per second.

4. dox
A: publicly shame.
B: publish someone's private information without their consent.
C: give a negative review.

5. chatbot
A: simulated human interlocutor.
B: language-learning app.
C: animatronic feline.

6. firewall
A: network security system.
B: viral challenge involving jumping a motorcycle over a flaming board.
C: spicy Silicon Valley latte.

7. node
A: junk mail.
B: sponsored content.
C: point of connection in a network.

8. selfie
A: digital oversharer.
B: photographic self-portrait.
C: phone-sized purse.

9. mainframe
A: large, powerful computer.
B: older app user.
C: body of an email.

10. cryptocurrency
A: digital money not regulated by a central authority.
B: web slang for uranium.
C: metric for perceived value of a tech start-up.

11. Boolean
A: visible on the dark web
B: surpassing one billion users.
C: data type with only 'true' or 'false' values.

12. netiquette
A: polite online behaviour.
B: higher price tag on online orders.
C: optimal search term.

13. captcha
A: keyboard duster.
B: test used to differentiate between humans and computers.
C: cyberattack.

14. cookie
A: novice Internet user.
B: metadata of an altered financial record.
C: data packet used to identify a user.

15. deepfake
A: online persona used as a romantic lure.
B: corrupt line of code.
C: manipulation creating a false image or recording

Word Power ANSWERS

1. meme
C: image or behaviour that spreads through imitation; as in, Grumpy Cat, a pet with an irritated expression, is a famous Internet meme.

2. pharming
A: redirecting traffic to a fraudulent website; as in, Adisha's credit card information was stolen when he fell victim to pharming.

3. gigaflop
C: speed of one billion floating-point operations per second; as in, An early supercomputer, Cray 2, could perform 1.9 gigaflops.

4. dox
B: publish someone's private information without their consent; as in, Bullies use doxing to intimidate their targets.

5. chatbot
A: simulated human interlocutor; as in, Siri, the chatbot that acts as a digital assistant, was released in 2010.

6. firewall
A: network security system; as in, The skilled hacker broke through the firewall.

7. node—C: point of connection in a network; as in, Jo's printer was one node on her home network.

8. selfie—B: photographic self-portrait; as in, Some 80 per cent of Londoners edit their selfies.

9. mainframe
A: large, powerful computer; as in, The mainframe Harvard Mark I weighed nearly five tonnes.

10. cryptocurrency
A: digital money not regulated by a central authority; as in, The Victoria HarbourCats baseball team is the first sports franchise in Canada to accept cryptocurrency as payment for tickets.

11. Boolean
C: data type with only 'true' or 'false' values; as in, Using Boolean operators like 'NOT' and 'OR' can make Google results more relevant.

12. netiquette
A: polite behaviour online; as in, Failing to answer an email may strike some as poor netiquette.

13. captcha
B: test used to differentiate between humans and computers; as in, Fatima had to identify four pictures of traffic lights in the captcha.

14. cookie
C: data packet used to identify a user; as in, Companies use cookies to show targeted ads to users.

15. deepfake
C: manipulation creating a false image or recording; as in, The deepfake that places Elon Musk's face on Charlie Sheen's body is eerily convincing.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: pat on the back
10–12: above the norm
13–15: high mark

QUIZ

BY *Beth Shillibeer*

1. Actors Dolph Lundgren, Ken Jeong, Mayim Bialik and Rowan Atkinson share what educational background?

2. What bird is the national symbol of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, yet is vulnerable to extinction?

3. Aiming to make fashion more inclusive, Aille Design uses Swarovski crystal pearls to create what design element for T-shirts and masks?

4. Mary Simon made history in 2021 as the first Indigenous person to be appointed to what position in the Canadian government?

5. What country has the most vending machines per capita?

6. Which were invented first: skis or wheels?

7. Which country invites the public to suggest comedic names for its snowplows, like 'Sir Salter Scott' and 'Lord Coldemort'?

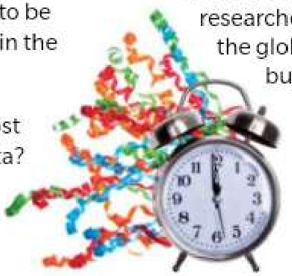
8. Recent findings show that Earth has an eighth continent, though it's largely submerged under water. What is it called?

9. What country has the world's only non-quadrilateral national flag?

10. What six-member team made its official Olympic debut at the Tokyo games?

11. Lonar Lake in India, Kenya's Lake Nakuru and Lake Van in Turkey are all what kind of lake?

12. UNESCO statistics show that female researchers comprise 30 per cent of the global workforce in the sciences, but 63 per cent in what South American country?



13. King Louis XIX of France and Portugal's King Luís II Filipe share what royal record?

14. In 1844, Samuel Morse sent the first long-distance message ('What hath God wrought') using what new technology?

15. How many times can the new year be celebrated as clocks strike midnight around the world?

Answers 1. Master's degree or higher in STEM. **2.** Andean Condor. **3.** Braille phrases. **4.** Governor General. **5.** Japan. **6.** Skis, more than 10,000 years ago. **7.** Scotland. **8.** Zealandia. **9.** Nepal. **10.** Refugee Paralympic Team. **11.** Soda lakes (high alkalinity). **12.** Bolivia. **13.** Shortest reign (20 minutes). **14.** The telegraph. **15.** 38 (because there are 38 different local times).

PHOTO: © GETTY IMAGES

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Education is discipline for the adventure of life.

Alfred North Whitehead, *philosopher*

Remember, no one is stopping you from lighting a lamp in a dark night.

Harivansh Rai Bacchan, *writer*

My mother always used to say, “The older you get, the better you get. Unless you’re a banana”.

Betty White, *actor*

War is what happens when language fails.

Margaret Atwood, *writer*

ALAMY(3); VIKRAM SHARMA

Alfred North Whitehead
Harivansh Rai Bacchan
Betty White
Margaret Atwood

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NATURE WONDER

Hamdard
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SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Earn more with the power of compounding, every month.

Interest will be credited to your Savings Account on the 1st of every month. So next month you will earn interest on your balances, including interest on previous month's interest. And so on. Thus you will earn interest on interest, resulting in much higher earnings for you. Also, check out our high Savings Account interest rates as below.

Attractive Interest Rates p.a. on Savings Account

For Balances up to ₹1 lakh	4%
>₹1 lakh up to ₹10 lakhs	4.5%
>₹10 lakhs up to ₹2 crores	5%

For a host of Debit Card activation and cashback offers, reward vouchers on on-boarding, digital platforms, 24X7 call center and full interest rate table, please refer to www.idfcfirstbank.com

So at IDFC FIRST Bank, you earn a lot more. Because you get higher rates on your savings. And you get the power of monthly compounding.